NATION

HC acquits Ram Rahim in 2002 journo murder case

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BUSINESS

India to source gas from Aus & Canada

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

NZ stands in the way of India's date with history

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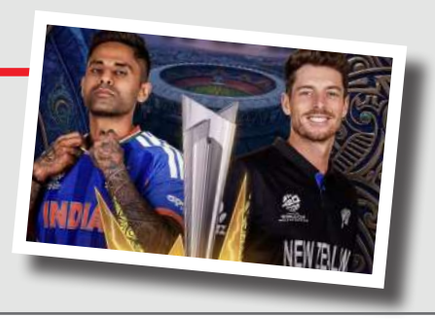

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# SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 8 MARCH 2026 | SUNDAY | BENGALURU | 18 RAMADAN, 1447 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 59 | Pages: 8

# Iran says won't strike Gulf nations unless attacked

## Iran Prez apologises to Gulf; Don says Iran will be hit hard

**DUBAI, 7 MARCH**

Iran's President **Masoud Pezeshkian** on Saturday apologised to neighbouring countries hit by Iranian missile and drone attacks even as strikes continued across the Gulf region, highlighting apparent divisions within Tehran's leadership and raising questions about the government's control over the armed forces.

Pezeshkian, part of a three-member leadership council overseeing Iran after the February 28 airstrike that killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and triggered the war, delivered the message exactly a week into a conflict that has spread across the region and rattled global markets and air travel.

In a hastily recorded message, the president apologised to regional nations affected by the attacks and said Iran should pursue diplomacy. "I should apologise to the neighbouring countries that were attacked by Iran, on my own behalf," he said. "From now on, they should not attack neighbouring countries or fire missiles at them, unless we are attacked by those countries."

A warehouse in the industrial area of Sharjah city was attacked in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on Sunday —PTI

The statement underscored the limited authority exercised by Iran's civilian leadership over the powerful Revolutionary Guard, which controls the country's ballistic missile programme and traditionally answered directly to Khamenei. Analysts say the force now appears to be selecting targets independently as the conflict widens.

WEST ASIA WAR DAY-8

Shortly after Pezeshkian's remarks, US President Donald Trump warned that more Iranian officials could be targeted. Writing on his Truth Social platform, Trump said: "Today Iran will be hit very hard!" and warned that areas previously not considered for attack were now under review.

Even as Pezeshkian sought to calm tensions, Iranian missiles and drones continued to strike Gulf states. Sirens sounded in Bahrain early Saturday, while Saudi Arabia said it had intercepted drones headed toward the Shaybah oil field and shot down a ballistic missile targeting Prince Sultan Air Base, which hosts US forces.

In the United Arab Emirates, explosions were heard in Dubai on Saturday morning, prompting authorities to activate air defence systems. At Dubai International Airport, passengers were temporarily moved into train tunnels after alerts sounded. Confusion within Iran's leadership also appeared evident in official statements. After Pezeshkian called for restraint, armed forces spokesman Gen. Abolfazl Shekarchi said Iran had "not hit countries that did not provide space for America to invade our country," despite the US strikes not originating from Gulf states now under attack. Amid the turmoil, senior cleric Ayatollah Nasser Makarem Shirazi urged Iran's Assembly of Experts to quickly appoint a new supreme leader following Khamenei's death. —PTI

>>>More on Pages 3, 5 & 6

# Cooking gas gets dearer as LPG rate hiked by ₹ 60

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 7**

Domestic cooking gas LPG prices were hiked by Rs 60 per cylinder on Saturday, marking the second increase in less than a year, as rising global energy prices following the West Asia crisis weighed on India, the world's third-largest energy consumer.

The price of commercial LPG, used by establishments such as hotels and restaurants, was also raised by Rs 114.5 per 19-kg cylinder.

Non-subsidised LPG is the fuel used by most households for cooking.

Beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana — over 10 crore poor households that received free LPG connections since 2016 — will also face the same increase.

After accounting for the Rs 300 subsidy per cylinder available for up to 12 refills a year, Ujjwala beneficiaries will now pay Rs 613 for a 14.2-kg cylinder.

Top government sources said the price revision was necessitated by a sharp spike in global energy prices.

Officials said energy markets surged after the US and Israel launched attacks on Iran last weekend, triggering wider conflict in the oil- and gas-rich West Asia. —PTI

>>>More on Page 7

**WHAT ARE THE RATES FOR BENGALURU?**

| Prices | Before 7 March | New price |
|---|---|---|
| Domestic LPG | Rs 855.5 | Rs 915.5 |
| Commercial LPG | Rs 1,814 | Rs 1,958 |

## Bagalkot tense after 'Jai Sri Ram' painted on mosque

**BAGALKOT, 7 MARCH**

Tension prevailed in Bagalkot after local Muslim community took strong objection to the writing of a 'Jai Sri Ram' graffiti on the compound wall of a nearby Mosque in the city. The latest incident of communal unrest has come close on heels of the incident of stone pelting on the Shivaji Jayanti procession in the Killa Oni area of Bagalkot city recently. Giving details about the incident, the police said it all started after a man was allegedly found to be making his 12-year-old son 'Jai Shri Ram' on the compound wall of a mosque in Sector 44, triggering anger among the Muslim community. —Salar News

>>>More on Page 2

## Group seeks ban on Nasir's B'luru comedy show

**BENGALURU, 7 MARCH**

The Hindu Janajagruti Samiti has urged the Bengaluru City Police to cancel a stand-up comedy show by Nasir Akhtar scheduled on 8 March at the Ministry of Comedy in Koramangala, citing concerns over alleged remarks hurting religious sentiments. In a representation to the police commissioner, the organisation said Akhtar, reportedly of Bengali origin, had in earlier performances mocked Hindu Dharma, Lord Shri Ram, the slogan "Jai Shri Ram", and the concept of a Hindu Rashtra. The group claimed that such remarks had hurt Hindu sentiments and could trigger law and order issues. Given the "sensitive situation" in Karnataka, the Samiti said permitting the event could lead to communal tension. —Salar News

## 5-yr-old girl raped by 15-yr-old boy in Himachal

**BILASPUR, 7 MARCH**

Tension gripped a village in Himachal's Bilaspur district after a five-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a 15-year-old boy. The incident occurred on Friday when the boy took the girl to the fields. As news spread, a crowd vandalised the accused's house, breaking doors and windows and setting a scooter on fire. The mob demanded the accused be handed over, but police calmed the situation and assured action. Both are from the same village. On Saturday, Vishwa Hindu Parishad members gathered outside the victim's house, and police detained the boy under the POCSO Act, assuring strict action. Authorities urged restraint to maintain law and order. —PT

# 'Humane' grounds: EAM on Iranian ship in Kochi

**NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH**

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday said India allowed the Iranian naval ship IRIS Lavan to dock in Kochi on humanitarian grounds, emphasising that New Delhi's actions were guided by international law and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

His remarks came in his first reaction after the United States torpedoed and sank the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena south of Sri Lanka earlier this week.

Jaishankar said India received a message from Iran on March 1 requesting permission for a vessel facing technical problems to enter an Indian port. The ship, which had taken part in the International Fleet Review 2026 hosted by India in February, docked at Kochi on March 4.

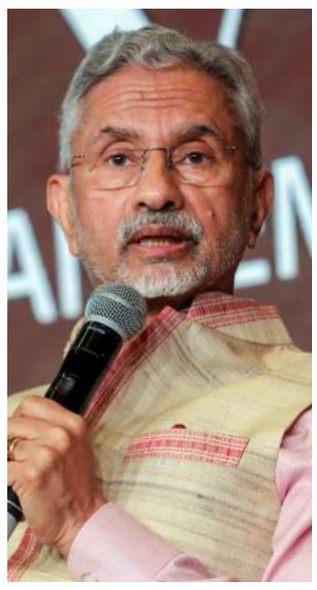
The vessel carries 183 crew members, many of them young naval cadets, who are currently being accommodated at Indian naval facilities.

"When the ships had set out and when they came here, the situation was totally different," Jaishankar said, adding that the vessel had originally set out for a naval drill but got "caught on the wrong side of events" as tensions escalated in the region.

Referring to the US strike on the Iranian warship, Jaishankar said India remains a "net security provider" in the Indian Ocean but must also take into account the prevailing security situation in the region.

Speaking at the Raisina Dialogue, he also asserted that India's global rise is "unstoppable" and will be shaped by its own strengths rather than the "mistakes" of others.

Jaishankar's comments came two days after US Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau said that the US will not repeat the mistake of providing India the same type of economic advantages it gave China that helped Beijing become a key competitor of the US. —PTI



### BIHAR MAN 'KILLED' IN ATTACK ON SHIP OFF OMAN COAST

Investigations are on to ascertain the identity of the people, one of them suspected to be from Bihar, who were reportedly killed in an attack on a container ship in the restive West Asia region earlier this week, an official said. According to Taranjot Singh, the District Magistrate of West Champaran, local resident Captain Ashish Kumar was on board the ship that went up in flames upon being hit, on 1 March, by an unidentified projectile off the coast of Oman. "Two charred bodies, one in the captain's cabin, have been recovered from the wreckage," Singh told PTI. —PTI

# Balen defeats Oil, named Nepal PM

**KATHMANDU, 7 MARCH**

Rapper-turned politician Balendra Shah swept the Nepal polls on Saturday to become the country's Prime Minister. He defeated four-time PM KP Sharma Oli by a huge margin of about 50,000 votes in Jhapa-5 constituency in the first elections since the Gen Z protests last year.

Balendra Shah 'Balen,' the Prime Ministerial candidate of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) secured 68,348 votes. Seventy four-year-old Oli, the chair of Nepal's legacy party, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) -- CPN-UML, secured 18,734, the Election Commission (EC) said.

The RSP, which was formed in 2022 by Ravi Lamichhane, won 62 seats out of the 78 seats. RSP's seats include a clean sweep in all 10 constituencies of Kathmandu district even as it is leading in 60 seats across the country, the EC data showed.

Nepal witnessed about 60 per cent voter turnout during the 5 March elections to the House of Representatives. The counting of votes started late Thursday night and as of 5 pm Saturday, counting was in progress in 162 constituencies, the Election Commission said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday congratulated the people and government of Nepal for the successful conduct of elections. "It is heartening to see my Nepali sisters and brothers exercise their democratic rights so vibrantly. This historic milestone is a proud moment in Nepal's democratic journey," Modi said on X. —PTI

>>>More on Page 6

## NITISH'S SON TO BE APPOINTED BIHAR'S DYCM AND MLC

**PATNA, 7 MARCH**

JD(U) MLA Hari Narayan Singh, a close aide of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, said a "unanimous" decision was taken to make the party leader's son Nishant the deputy CM in the upcoming government after Kumar's resignation. Singh, from Harnaut in Nalanda, also stated Nishant, entering politics in his late 40s, will be elected to the legislative council next month. He added, "A decision was taken only on Nishant," regarding the deputy CM post. JD(U) working president Sanjay Kumar Jha confirmed Nishant's formal induction would be on Sunday, stating, "He will start working actively from tomorrow." Singh noted, "It is not clear whether Nishant will become deputy CM immediately or later," and that the top leadership will decide. Kumar's move follows his decision to step down after a long tenure. Speculations suggest BJP may assume the CM role, with JD(U) potentially insisting on two deputy CMs. —PTI

>>>More on Page 4

# My Budget is 'well within fiscal limits': CM

**MYSURU, 7 MARCH**

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah rejected the BJP's criticism that the state budget was debt-driven and favoured only one section He asserted on Saturday that the government has maintained fiscal discipline within the limits prescribed by law.

Siddaramaiah, who also holds finance portfolio, presented the 17th budget in the Karnataka Assembly on Friday with an outlay of Rs 4.48 lakh crore.

He said the state government had remained within the limits set by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003.

The CM defended the state's borrowing asserting that development cannot take place without raising funds within fiscal norms.

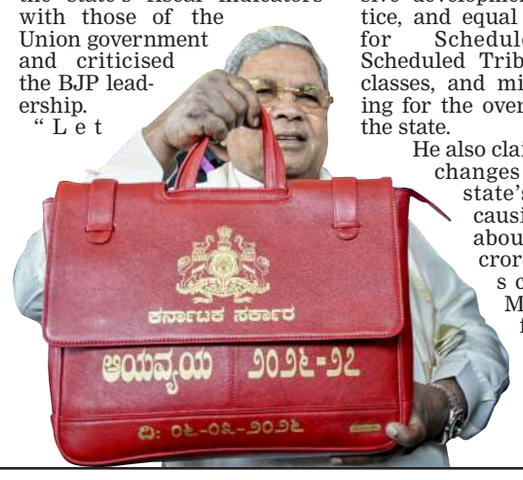
Siddaramaiah also compared the state's fiscal indicators with those of the Union government and criticised the BJP leadership.

"Let them say how much debt the Centre has taken. Development cannot be achieved without borrowing," Siddaramaiah said.

He added that while the country's fiscal deficit stood at 4.4 per cent, Karnataka's fiscal deficit was within 3 per cent of GDP limits.

Siddaramaiah dismissed claims that the budget favored specific communities, emphasizing that it focused on inclusive development, social justice, and equal opportunities for all. He also claimed that GST changes hurt the state's finances, causing a loss of about Rs 10,000 crore, and said scrapping MGNREGA has further strained the government. —PTI

>>>More on Page 2




- Siddaramaiah dismissed claims that the budget favored specific communities, emphasising that it focused on inclusive development, social justice, and equal opportunities for all.

**TO LIFT FERTILITY RATE**

# *Andhra announces Rs 25,000 incentive for 2nd & 3rd child*

**NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH**

The Andhra Pradesh government has decided to introduce the population management policy from April 1 which will provide for incentives like Rs 25,000 for the birth of a second or third child, besides a monthly financial support of 1,000 for the third child for five years and free education till the child attains the age of 18 years.

The state Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu had earlier announced the new population management policy in the state assembly on Thursday. The policy proposed financial incentives to encourage childbirth. Further, families having a second or third child will get Rs 25,000 at the time of delivery.

Speaking at the Raisina Dialogue held in the national capital on Saturday, Naidu highlighted demographic challenges in South India and outlined the state's new Population Management Policy aimed at addressing declining fertility rates. The new policy would come into effect from 1 April this year he said.

"Some countries are already facing an ageing problem. India still has the advantage of a demographic dividend, which will remain up to 2047. India's replacement fertility rate is 2.1, and currently it is around 2.2. But in South India, we are around 1.5 - far below the replacement level," Naidu said. —ANI

## Techie killed in KSRTC–car crash in Uttara Kannada

**KARWAR, 7 MARCH**

A 39-year-old man died after his car allegedly collided with a KSRTC bus in Uttara Kannada district, police said on Saturday. Mukesh Krishna Shetty, a web developer and founder of Maks Infotech, was travelling from Kundapur to Hubballi on 5 March when the accident occurred near Malalagav village in Yellapur taluk. Shetty was rushed to the government hospital in Yellapur but succumbed to his injuries during treatment, police said. Authorities suspect the airbag may have burst during the crash. Based in Mangaluru, Shetty had founded Maks Infotech in Bendorewell and worked as a senior web developer. He is survived by wife, mother and two brothers. *—PTI*

# Modi should resign, says CM after LPG price hiked

## Links hike to Epstein files, says India has lost face globally

**BENGALURU, 7 MARCH**

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah demanded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resignation over the latest increase in domestic LPG cylinder refill prices. Siddaramaiah alleged that the hike was a result of "flawed foreign policy decisions" by the Union government.'

Domestic cooking gas LPG price was hiked on Saturday by a steep Rs 60 per cylinder, the second increase in rate in less than a year. This comes amid the conflict in West Asia.

Siddaramaiah on Saturday stated the increase would further strain households at a time when families were already facing rising prices.

"The latest increase in LPG cylinder prices is deeply concerning for millions of households across India. At a time when families are already battling relentless inflation, yet another burden is being placed on the kitchens of ordinary citizens," he stated on X.

The CM said the price rise was a consequence of India's foreign policy approach and criticised the "compromised" PM's "loss of strategic autonomy".

"This crisis is not accidental. It is the result of a foreign policy that mistakes submission for strategy.... Modi has repeatedly surrendered India's strategic autonomy by aligning blindly with the US and disrupting India's long-standing energy partnerships with nations such as Russia and Iran," he said.

Congress workers protest against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump over the LPG price hike in Bengaluru on Saturday *–MOHAMMED ASAD*

Quoting India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Siddaramaiah wrote, "Foreign policy is the outcome of economic policy."

"When diplomacy turns from a strategy into a mere spectacle, the poor and middle-class inevitably become the victims," CM added.

He also referred to the unpublished book by former Army chief MM Naravane, claiming it raised concerns about the lack of institutional consultation and strategic depth in India's foreign policy decisions.

"This confirms that the PM lacks a fundamental understanding of a diplomatic stance and its economic repercussions," he stated.

"The failure of India's current foreign policy reveals Modi's fear regarding the Epstein files," Siddaramaiah added. The Epstein files refers to documents pertaining to late convicted sex trafficker Jefrey Epstein.

"Modi, who is causing the country to lose face on the global stage, should publicly apologise and resign," he concluded. *—Agencies*

> **The Central Government should have at least a little shame. They have practically mortgaged our entire foreign policy to the US. Our dignity is being valued at almost nothing... The US Secretary of the Treasury said because of the war they (US) have given India a 30-day permission to purchase crude oil from Russia.' Permission!... In Parliament they said we have reserves for 75 days. But oil companies say in press conferences that we have only 25 days. How is that?**
>
> -Priyank Kharge, IT/BT Minister

**AMID POWER TUSSLE**

# Will present 2 more budgets if High Command wants: CM

**MYSURU, 7 MARCH**

A day after presenting his record 17th budget, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah stated that if the party High Command allows him to, he will present two more budgets.

The comments come amid speculations of a power tussle with his Deputy DK Shivakumar. Siddaramaiah has insisted that he would present the 17th Budget, raising questions about whether he would continue as the CM after doing so.

Speaking to reporters in Mysuru, he reiterated that his position to continue in the top post rests with the High Command.

"I will continue as CM until the High Command decides, and will present the remaining two other budgets of this five-year term. The decision of continuing or discontinuing lies with the High Command leaders," he stated. "I will abide by the High Command's decision".

"Breaking records is not an achievement," he added.

However, in a sharp rebuttal to speculations that segments of society wanted other candidates as the Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah stated that it was not only the people of Mysuru district who want him to continue, but it was the will of the whole State.

Siddaramaiah also inaugurated the newly constructed Dandina Maramma temple at Pillahalli in Varuna assembly segment. *—Salar News*

## Bagalkot tense after 'Jai Sri Ram' painted on mosque

**BAGALKOT, 7 MARCH**

Tension prevailed in Bagalkot after local Muslim community took strong objection to the writing of a 'Jai Sri Ram' graffiti on the compound wall of a nearby Mosque in the city.

The latest incident of communal unrest has come close on heels of the incident of stone pelting on the Shivaji Jayanti procession in the Killa Oni area of Bagalkot city recently.

Giving details about the incident, the police said it all started after a man was allegedly found to be making his 12-year-old son 'Jai Shri Ram' on the compound wall of a mosque in Sector 44, triggering anger among the Muslim community.

CCTV footage captured the accused writing the slogan on the mosque wall and later leaving the spot in an autorickshaw. The incident created tension in the area.

Acting on a complaint filed by a man identified as Ladkhan, police at the Navanagar Police Station registered a FIR and took the accused, identified as Yamanuri, along with his son, into custody for questioning.

The police personnel were rushed to the spot to prevent the cool down the frayed tempers and prevent the situation from getting out of control.

The graffiti on the mosque wall was later erased by pouring water over it in an effort to restore normalcy in the area.

The police have stepped up security measures in the area have been put on high alert to prevent any untoward incident. *—Salar News*

**PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE**

Students and science enthusiasts attend Open Day, a science exhibition at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru on Saturday, where visitors were given free access to campus facilities *–MOHAMMED ASAD*

## Industry body BCIC says Budget is growth oriented

**BENGALURU, 7 MARCH**

The Bangalore Chamber of Industry and Commerce (BCIC) on Saturday welcomed the Karnataka Budget 2026-27, recognising its balanced approach towards fostering economic growth, supporting MSMEs, and enhancing infrastructure development.

K Ravi, Senior Vice President, BCIC and Chairman, International Business Committee appreciated the government's commitment to strengthening the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector through targeted financial incentives, skill development programs, and ease of doing business reforms.

"These measures are expected to boost manufacturing capabilities and create significant employment opportunities across the State," he said, in a statement.

According to him, the Budget's focus on infrastructure, including investments in road connectivity, urban development, and industrial parks, tourism and hospitality aligns with BCIC's vision of a robust industrial ecosystem that supports sustainable growth and competitiveness.

BCIC also applauded the emphasis on IT, AI, technology and innovation, which it said will drive Karnataka's position as a leading hub for startups and digital economy initiatives. *—PTI*

## Strict measures taken to fight cybercrime, says Parameshwara

**BENGALURU, 7 MARCH**

Home Minister G Parameshwara announced that the State has implemented strict measures to combat cybercrime, including establishing specialised units and expanding cyber police infrastructure.

Speaking after inaugurating the third annual cybercrime summit "CIDECODE" organised by the Criminal Investigation Department and the Cyber Crime Investigation Training and Research Centre, he said, "Karnataka is not just a State; it is a global brand. When the world looks at Bengaluru, it sees the future of innovation."

He highlighted the creation of 43 Cyber, Economic and Narcotics police stations. "Our government is committed to ensuring cybersecurity for our citizens," he added. He explained that the State has fostered a supportive ecosystem for cybersecurity innovation by collaborating with companies specialising in AI, cloud computing, compliance, and risk management. He stressed cooperation with the private sector and international organisations to address emerging threats such as dark web activities, cryptocurrency tracking, financial fraud, and digital forensic advancements. *—PTI*

# Man murders son, chops his body in Vijayanagara

**VIJAYANAGARA, 7 MARCH**

A gruesome murder has been uncovered in Beerabbi village, Hoovina Hadagali taluk in Vijayanagara, where a 25-year-old man's body was dismembered and concealed in plastic bags.

The victim, identified as Beeresh, had been missing for 15 days. His family and villagers discovered a foul smell behind Beeresh's house, leading to the find of his decomposed body.

Police suspect that the victim's father, Lakshmana, 58, murdered him during a heated argument on 12 February. "There had been frequent quarrels between the father and son over his drinking habits," police said. After killing Beeresh, Lakshmana chopped the body into pieces with an axe, packed them in plastic, and hid them in the backyard. The family had filed a missing person report, but the body was only found in Vijayanagara after the smell drew suspicion.

- Police believe that the father, Lakshmana, murdered his son during a heated dispute, and then hacked the body with an axe, packed it into plastic and hid it in the backyard

District SP Jahnavi S visited the scene and ordered a post-mortem. Lakshmana was arrested and is in judicial custody.

A case under Section 302 (murder) and Section 201 (destruction of evidence) has been registered at Hirehadagali police station. The victim's mother, Lakshmi, 45, reported the incident. *—Salar News*

## 700 sheep killed in Raichur blaze

**RAICHUR, 7 MARCH**

A shed caught fire late on Friday night and nearly 700 sheep were killed. Around a 100 pregnant sheep also died in the fire along with the lambs in their wombs.

The incident occurred on the outskirts of Mukkunda village in Sindhanur taluk of Raichur district.

The sheep shed belonged to a woman named Hemalatha Madhusudan, who had built it at a cost of nearly Rs 1 crore. She had received Rs 47 lakh as subsidy from the Centre and the remaining was loans.

The fire broke out at around 2:30 am on Saturday. As the workers were asleep, they did not see the fire.

The fire fighters, the police and locals worked for nearly four hours to bring the fire under control.

Of the 700 sheep, 525 were insured, and the insurance company has been informed about the incident.

Padmanaydu, a relative of the shed owner, urged the government to provide compensation.

A case has been registered at the Sindhanur Rural Police Station, and investigation is underway. *—Salar News*

A shed in Mukkunda village of Raichur district caught fire *–SALAR*

**BAGALKOT MIRACLE**

# *'Dead' man breathes again on way to funeral*

**BAGALKOT, 7 MARCH**

A 65-year-old man who was presumed dead by his family showed signs of breathing while being taken for his funeral in the Jamkhandi town in Bagalkot district on Friday triggering panic and confusion among relatives.

The man, identified as Haji Mubarak Avati, a resident of Momin Galli, had been suffering from kidney failure and had recently suffered a heart attack. He was admitted to a private hospital in Belagavi, where he was undergoing treatment on ventilator support. Doctors had reportedly informed the family that his condition was critical and chances of survival were minimal.

Despite medical advice, the family decided to discharge him from hospital and bring him back to Jamkhandi.

The man suffered from a kidney and heart failure. Doctors hadn't pronounced him dead, but the family thought he'd stopped breathing *–AI*

After the ventilator support was removed, the family noticed no signs of breathing and assumed that he had died. They then began transporting him to Jamkhandi for the funeral.

However, near Lokapur, when the vehicle carrying him passed over a road hump, his family noticed signs of breathing, leading to panic among those accompanying him. The relatives immediately rushed him to the Jamkhandi Government Hospital.

- The doctors in Bagalkot had put him on a ventilator. When the family removed the ventilator and saw no signs of breathing, they believed he was dead.

Dr Krishna Bannada of the Jamkhandi Government Hospital said, a review of the medical records revealed that doctors at the Belagavi hospital had not declared the patient dead. He said the patient's condition had been extremely critical following a heart attack caused by kidney failure. Mubarak was later shifted to a private hospital in Vijayapura. *—Salar News*

## Fight over dog walk in apartment turns into scuffle

**BENGALURU, 7 MARCH**

A dispute between a pet owner and a group of senior citizens over walking a dog inside an apartment complex here allegedly escalated into a scuffle, with both sides filing complaints accusing each other of assault, police said on Saturday.

The incident occurred around 7.30am on 3 March when Tarun Arora, 42, had taken his pet dog for a walk inside the premises of the apartment complex in Varthur where a group of senior citizens were practising yoga and exercise, they said.

Video footage also shows both parties seen engaging in a heated argument which later escalated into a scuffle.

In his complaint, Arora said he initially did not notice the group and continued walking his dog.

Some members of the group later stopped him and told him that dogs should not be walked in that area, leading to an argument, he claimed. Arora alleged that during the altercation, the group verbally abused him and broke his phone.

However, as per the complaint of the senior citizens' group, Arora frequently brings his pet dog to the place where they perform yoga despite the presence of separate dog park.

Bajpai and his wife alleged that the dog often moves behind them and defecates in where they sit, and that Arora continued to bring the pet there despite repeated requests.

The complainants claimed that when they tried to prevent him from taking photographs, his mobile phone accidentally fell to the ground. Enraged by this, Arora allegedly grabbed Bajpai's collar and attempted to choke him. *—PTI*

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# Indians are good actors: US on oil waiver

## Says by unsanctioning Russian crude, the US can create uninterrupted supply of oil

Scott Bessent —PTI

**NEW YORK, 7 MARCH**

The US said it has given "permission" to India to buy Russian oil that is on ships already floating on waterways with a view to easing supplies around the world amid the West Asia conflict.

"The Indians had been very good actors. We had asked them to stop buying sanctioned Russian oil this fall....," US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said

Bessent added that there are hundreds of millions of sanctioned barrels of sanctioned crude on the water, and in essence, "by unsanctioning them, the US Treasury Department can create supply.

The US has now allowed India to buy Russian oil, months after President Donald Trump had imposed 25 per cent punitive tariffs on Delhi for its purchases of oil from Moscow.

> **Does anything more need to be said about how cowardly and compromised the self-proclaimed 56-inch chest has become?**
>
> – Jairam Ramesh, Congress leader

Energy Secretary Chris Wright said in a post that the US is "allowing our friends in India" to take the Russian oil already on ships around Southern Asia, refine it and move the stocks into the market quickly in order to ensure a flowing supply.

On 5 March the US said it was issuing a temporary 30-day waiver to allow Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil.

Bessent said this "deliberately short-term measure" will not provide significant financial benefit to the Russian government, as it only authorises transactions involving oil already stranded at sea.

Trump had imposed the 25 per cent punitive tariffs on India for buying Russian oil, with the administration asserting that Delhi's purchases were helping fuel Russia's war machine against Ukraine.

The US and India announced that they had reached a framework for an Interim Agreement on trade, and US had removed 25 per cent punitive tariffs on India. —*PTI*

## INDIA GOT BEST TRADE DEAL WITH US: GOYAL

**NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH**

India has secured the best trade deal with the US compared to its competing nations, **Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal** said on Saturday.

He said that the US is the world's largest economy - USD 30 trillion - and nobody can wish it away.

He was speaking at Raisina Dialogue 2026 here.

The minister added that India and the US are strategic partners, and the two are the largest democracies in the world.

He said that ultimately a trade deal is about preference over competitors.

He added that the India-US relationship is strong, multi-dimensional, and not only about trade as there is a huge technology overlay on it.

The two countries have finalised the framework for the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement. Under the deal, the US had announced to reduce reciprocal tariffs on India to 18 per cent. However, after the US Supreme Court striking down the tariffs, Trump imposed 10 per cent tariffs on all countries for 150 days. A meeting between the two countries to finalise the legal text was postponed—*PTI*

## 2 scribes film Iran's ship docked in Kerala, held

**KOCHI, 7 MARCH**

Two media personnel and a boat driver have been detained for allegedly trespassing into the high-security zone of Cochin Port harbour and capturing photographs and videos of an Iranian vessel on Saturday. They reportedly took images of the Iranian ship, which was anchored as part of a diplomatic decision by the Indian government for life-saving purposes. The Harbour police arrested the TV channel reporter, his cameraman, and the speed boat driver. They also attempted to circulate the footage, which authorities say could pose a threat to national and state security. The police have registered charges against the three accused under various sections of the BNS. A probe in underway.—PTI

— PTI

## MP Minister gets court notice for insulting tricolour

**JABALPUR, 7 MARCH**

A special MP/MLA court in Jabalpur has issued a notice to Madhya Pradesh Minister Rao Uday Pratap Singh over a plea alleging that he had insulted the national flag during a 2024 'Tiranga Yatra'.Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) D P Sutrakar recently issued the notice to Singh while hearing an application filed by one Kaushal Silawat, who sought directions to the police to register an FIR against Singh.The petitioner claimed the state transport minister had improperly displayed the tricolour on the bonnet of a vehicle during a yatra in Narsinghpur on August 11, 2024.The BJP had organised a series of 'Tiranga Yatras' ahead of Independence Day, including rallies and a campaign that year.—*PTI*

— PTI

## Kerala MLA targeted by cyber fraud gang

**PALAKKAD, 7 MARCH**

Kongad CPI(M) MLA K Shantakumari on Saturday said that she was targeted by a cyber fraud gang which contacted her claiming that an accused in the Pahalgam bomb blast case used a sim and a bank account in her name. She said that she initially received a call on Friday morning by someone claiming to be from the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) and she was told that a sim in her name was used by one of the Pahalgam bomb blast accused. Soon thereafter, police arrived and recorded her statement regarding the incident, she said. The MLA said that she has forwarded a complaint to the cyber cell on the matter. I have been told that the matter will be investigated seriously, Shantakumari said.—*PTI*

## UP man booked over offensive AI video of Modi

**KOCHI, 7 MARCH**

Police in Uttar Pradesh's Etah district have registered a FIR against a man for allegedly circulating an "objectionable" AI-generated video of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During the investigation, police found that the video was also circulated widely by an Instagram handle linked to one Sanjay, a resident of Puthiya village within the Pilua police station limits, Pilua SHO Sandeep Rana said. The video was posted on X on Friday. The police said on Saturday that the video was created by misusing artificial intelligence (AI) to manipulate the PM's image, which was later circulated on social media.—*PTI*

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi offers prayers at the Sri Sharadamba Temple at Sivagiri Mutt in Kollam in Kerala —*PTI*

## Rahul unveils 5 poll guarantees for Kerala

**T'PURAM, 7 MARCH**

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday announced five guarantee schemes that would be implemented if the UDF comes to power in Kerala.

He said free bus travel would be provided for all women and a monthly assistance of Rs 1,000 would be given to college-going girl students.

Gandhi also announced that welfare pensions would be increased to Rs 3,000 per month.

A health insurance scheme in the name of former chief minister Oommen Chandy would be introduced, providing coverage of up to Rs 25 lakh for each family.

The Congress leader also promised interest-free loans of up to Rs 5 lakh for small businesses.

In addition, he said a dedicated minister would be appointed for the welfare of senior citizens.

Gandhi made the announcements while inaugurating the valedictory function of the 'Puthuyuga Yatra' in Thiruvananthapuram.

Gandhi also said that China has built a "superb and unmatched" industrial system, but it was "coercive and undemocratic".

Rahul said that China has captured the industrial production side while the US, India and most of the world were "playing in the consumption space". —*PTI*

## Voters' names deleted to divide WB: Mamata

**KOLKATA, 7 MARCH**

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee with voters whose names were deleted from the electoral rolls-*PTI*

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday alleged that voter deletions in the post-SIR electoral rolls were aimed at dividing the state.

Addressing a gathering during her demonstration against the alleged arbitrary deletions from the electoral roll in the state, Banerjee accused the BJP of depriving Bengali-speaking people of their voting rights.

Banerjee had begun the demonstration in Kolkata on 6 March, accusing the Election Commission of conspiring with the BJP to "disenfranchise Bengal voters" ahead of the upcoming assembly elections.

She claimed of seeing a tweet that Bengal and Bihar could be divided to form a union territory.

Banerjee said 36,000 votes were deleted from Dinhata, while 60,000 votes were deleted from her Bhabanipur constituency

On the International Women's Day on Sunday thousands of women will hit the streets in Kolkata to protest against the deletion of women's names from the voter list and hike in LPG prices.

Banerjee said that the BJP never executes its electoral promises of equal rights and empowerment of women, while the TMC-led Bengal executes these in letter and spirit.

About 63.66 lakh names have been deleted since the SIR process began in November last year. Over 60.06 lakh electors have been placed under the "under adjudication" category—*PTI*

### Jobless matriculates to get Rs 1,500

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that from Saturday unemployed young job seekers, having passed secondary examination (class 10), will receive Rs 1,500 allowance every month to help them move towards a self-reliant future. Banerjee said young men and women - aged 21–40 years will rceive this aid. Around 1 crore people have applied for this scheme and they are not beneficiaries of any other scheme except scholarships. The state's unemployment rate decreased by 40 per cent.—*PTI*

## Didi calls WB's new Guv Ravi 'BJP cadre'

**KOLKATA/CHENNAI, 7 MARCH**

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee accused incoming Governor RN Ravi of being a "BJP cadre" and claimed his appointment was due to Centre pressure, following the sudden exit of CV Ananda Bose from Lok Bhavan.

Banerjee alleged that the BJP-led government aims to turn Lok Bhavan into a political outpost ahead of the assembly elections, saying, "He was threatened. They want to distribute money from Lok Bhavan. They want Lok Bhavan to be converted into a BJP party office."

She also criticised Ravi's tenure in Tamil Nadu, asserting he faced "many comments" from the Supreme Court and is a BJP cadre. She vowed to resist Centre interference, saying, "If you try to threaten us, we will ensure the fall of the BJP government."

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin called on Ravi at Lok Bhavan, presenting a miniature statue of Thiruvalluvar as tensions over his appointment intensified. —*PTI*

## TMC to back no-confidence motion against LS Speaker

**NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH**

The Trinamool Congress announced that it will support the no-confidence motion against **Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla**, which has been filed by several opposition members. The resolution is the only item listed for discussion when the Budget session of Parliament resumes on Monday.

At least 118 opposition MPs want to move the resolution to remove Birla as speaker of the Lower House for allegedly acting in a "blatantly partisan" manner.

Almost all TMC MPs, "except those unwell," will be present in the Lok Sabha when the notice is considered on Monday, a TMC leader said. The party is also in touch with other INDIA bloc leaders on the issue.

If 50 House members stand when called by the Chair on Monday, the notice will be admitted and the resolution debated and voted on. The numbers heavily favour the government, ensuring the resolution's defeat. BJP and Congress have asked MPs to be present in the House.—*PTI*

## Poland, India eye joint defence production

**NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH**

Poland is looking forward to expanding defence cooperation with India, particularly in advanced drone technologies, the Polish Foreign Ministry official said on Friday.

"These capabilities are something that we can share and have shared before with India," Michal Baranowski, Under Secretary in the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology said in response to what Poland shared with India during Operation Sindoor.

A Polish official stated that Polish drones played a role in dismantling terror infrastructure during the campaign.

"We are looking at not only India as a market, but India as a partner. I hope that we can move more of the production in a joint venture kind of way," he added.

Polish defence firm WB Group, is expanding its "Make in India" presence in the drone sector. —*PTI*

## Kashmir lifts curbs after pro-Khamenei protests

**SRINAGAR, 7 MARCH**

Life returned to normal across Kashmir as authorities lifted restrictions imposed during protests over the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Restrictions, in place all week, were eased on Saturday, with security forces removing barricades, including at Lal Chowk's iconic Ghanta Ghar, which had been sealed after protests erupted last Sunday following the US-Israel strike that killed Khamenei.

Officials confirmed that shops and businesses reopened in Lal Chowk and other areas, and public and private transport resumed normal operations. Mobile internet and prepaid SIM services, restricted since Monday, were restored on Friday evening, though educational institutions remain shut and are scheduled to reopen on March 9. While barricades and most security personnel have been withdrawn, the situation continues to be monitored closely.

Mass protests occurred in Kashmir, home to about 15 lakh Shias, with major demonstrations at Lal Chowk, Saida Kadal, Budgam, Bandipora, Anantnag, and Pulwama. Protesters shouted anti-US and anti-Israel slogans, with some beating their chests. While largely peaceful, minor clashes did occur, with security forces using minor force to maintain law and order.

PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti urged the Police to release those arrested for participating in peaceful protests.—*PTI*

## 70L inclusion, 2.68L deletion requests in UP SIR

**LUCKNOW, 7 MARCH**

Over 70.69 lakh Form 6 claims for inclusion in the electoral rolls and 2.68 lakh objections via Form 7, seeking deletion of names, were received in Uttar Pradesh as part of the SIR exercise.

Chief electoral officer ((CEO) Navdeep Rinwa said on Saturday said that during the two-month claims and objections period, 70,69,810 Form 6 applications were received, with 35,72,603 submitted by women, 34,96,911 by men and 296 by third gender voters.

Regarding objections for deletion of names from the rolls, 2,68,682 Form 7 applications were submitted, including 1,58,027 by male voters, 1,10,645 by female voters and 10 by third gender voters.

The draft electoral roll published in January contained 12.55 crore voters, including 6.88 crore men, 5.67 crore women and 4,119 third gender voters (0.01 per cent).

Notices were issued to 3.26 crore voters whose details required verification. This included 1.4 crore voters whose details were not mapped with the 2003 SIR.

Odisha CEO RS Gopalan said tha 90 per cent of the voters in the state have been mapped with the 2002 electoral roll. —*PTI*

**AHEAD OF POLLS**

## *TVK promises gold for women, Rs 2,500 monthly aid*

**CHENNAI, 7 MARCH**

TVK chief Vijay on Saturday announced a slew of promises for women, including a monthly financial aid of Rs 2,500, a sovereign gold with silk saree as wedding gift to young women, and six LPG cylinders free for all families.

The monthly assistance would be provided to all women except government employees, upto the age of 60, when his Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam comes to power, Vijay said at the International Women's Day event held under the aegis of TVK at Mamallapuram near here.

The six LPG cylinders would be provided annually under the 'Annapurani super six scheme'.

TVK Chief Vijay during an event marking the International Women's Day 2026, in Mamallapuram in Tamil Nadu on Saturday —*PTI*

In order to ensure zero dropout in schools, each mother or guardian would be provided an annual financial assistance of Rs 15,000 under the 'Kamarajar Kalvi Uruthi Thittam'.

Ensuring safety for women smart panic buttons would be established in buses. Free sanitary pads would be provided through ration shops, schools and in colleges.

Vijay also announced interest-free allocation of upto Rs 5 lakh for women self-help Groups.

He announced free bus travel in all state government-run buses for women, zero tolerance for crimes against women, dedication of 'Rani Velu Nachiyar' unit in police to ensure safety for women, and special fast-track courts for expeditious disposal of cases of crimes against women.

Vijay's wife seeks residential rights amid divorce

Vijay's wife Sankgeetha, who has already filed for divorce, has filed a new affidavit in a court seeking an interim order to allow her to continue to reside in her matrimonial home here until the disposal of the original petition or until the actor-politician provides an alternative accommodation.

She has also already sought fair and reasonable permanent alimony from Vijay—*PTI*

## 3 die in Gujarat of asphyxiation while cleaning up tank

**SURAT, 7 MARCH**

Three workers died of suspected asphyxiation after entering an underground tank at Paras Print Private Limited in Surat's Pandesara industrial area for cleaning. The incident occurred Thursday night but was only reported to police on Friday. Sonu Paswan, 23, Dilip Paswan, 19, and Sandeep Paswan, 23, died; Mahendra Paswan remains critically ill in hospital. Inspector JR Chaudhar confirmed, "They entered the ETP tank, all four fell unconscious, and were rushed to hospital. Doctors declared three dead." Gujarat Pollution Control Board officials and forensic teams have launched an investigation, with reports awaited to establish the cause of death. —*PTI*

— *PTI*

## Social media influencer's house attacked in Thane

**THANE, 7 MARCH**

Unidentified persons fired at the house of social media influencer Nadeem (Baba) Khan in Mumbra on Saturday. There were no injuries, but Khan's car was damaged. The incident happened around 4am, and an FIR has been registered under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Arms Act. Khan claims he had earlier reported threats to police, but no action was taken. A viral video shows Khan shouting at the miscreants and alleging threats to his life. Authorities are verifying his claims and examining CCTV footage to identify the suspects involved. —*PTI*

## UP Deputy CM's helicopter makes emergency landing

**LUCKNOW, 7 MARCH**

A helicopter carrying Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya made an emergency landing after developing a technical snag shortly after take-off. The helicopter, with five onboard including Maurya, experienced smoke inside, prompting the pilots to land at Lucknow airport. The incident occurred en route to Kaushambi for multiple events. A BJP leader stated Maurya was unharmed and plans to travel later by another helicopter. Experts have been called to investigate the cause of the smoke and technical failure. Maurya's safety has not been compromised, and officials are examining the incident. —*PTI*

## Meghalaya sees largest drug bust worth Rs 51 crore

**SHILLONG, 7 MARCH**

The Meghalaya police seized drugs worth over Rs 51 crore in East Jaintia Hills, in the largest narcotics haul in the state's history. The operation was part of a coordinated effort with the Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) in Ratacherra on Friday. Authorities intercepted a vehicle carrying three people, including the driver. They recovered 19 soap cases containing 203.7 grams of suspected heroin, and a blue trolley bag held 10.145kg of banned crystal meth (methamphetamine). Two Mizoram residents were arrested. An investigation has been launched to uncover trafficking links and details of the syndicate involved.—*PTI*

# HC acquits Ram Rahim in 2002 journo murder case

## Scribe killed for exposing sexual exploitation at Dera HQ

**CHANDIGARH, 7 MARCH**

The Punjab and Haryana High Court acquitted Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh on Saturday in the 2002 murder case of a journalist, seven years after he was sentenced to life imprisonment by a special CBI court.

The 58-year-old Dera chief is now lodged in Rohtak's Sunaria jail, where he is serving a 20-year jail term given in 2017 for the rape of two of his disciples.

Journalist Ram Chander Chhatrapati was shot outside his house in October 2002 in Haryana's Sirsa after his newspaper 'Poora Sach' published an anonymous letter narrating the sexual exploitation of women at the Dera headquarters in Sirsa.

The journalist later died, and a case was registered in which Ram Rahim was named as a conspirator. The case was handed over to the CBI in 2006. Ram Rahim and three others were convicted by a special CBI court in Panchkula in January 2019. He had challenged the conviction before the high court.

"The high court division bench headed by Chief Justice Sheel Nagu on Saturday acquitted him (Ram Rahim) in the murder case of journalist Ram Chander Chhatrapati. The bench, however, has upheld the conviction of three others in the case," sect head's lawyer Jitender Khurana said.

The journalist's son, Anshul Chhatrapati, described the HC verdict as a "setback" for his family, and said they will challenge it in the SC.

The defence counsel contended that the first charge sheet against three other accused was already filed and none of them named the appellant as being involved in the conspiracy. However, the CBI and the counsel representing the deceased journalist's family had strongly opposed the sect head's plea.

In the high court, the defence counsel had also claimed contradictions in the ballistic evidence in the case. — *PTI*

Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh has been acquitted in the 2002 murder case of journalist Ram Chander Chhatrapati —*ANI*

**SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS FAKE: PIB**

# 'No new UT near Siliguri corridor'

**PATNA, 7 MARCH**

Nityanand Rai—*WIKIPEDIA*

The Centre described as "fake" social media posts which claimed that it was planning to create a new UT comprising a few districts of Bihar and West Bengal near the Siliguri corridor.

"Social media posts claim that the Centre is planning to create a new UT comprising some districts of Bihar and West Bengal near the Siliguri corridor. This is fake," the PIB Fact Check said on 'X.'

Earlier, the Minister of State for Home, Nityanand Rai, dismissed speculations that a move was afoot to form a new UT from some districts of Bihar and West Bengal.

Rai came out with a post on his X handle, rubbishing the claim of Independent MP Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav.

Yadav had on Friday alleged that Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's decision to move to Rajya Sabha, and the appointment of Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Syed Ata Hasnain, as the new governor, was part of the "BJP's game-plan" to create a UT from Bihar's Seemanchal region and WB's Muslim districts of Malda, Murshidabad and Uttar Dinajpur. He had also claimed that the Centre could push through the measure by getting a resolution passed by the Bihar Assembly in Bihar. — *PTI*

# Euro Space Agency, ISRO ink pact on earth watch missions

**NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH**

The ISRO announced on Saturday that it has signed an agreement with the European Space Agency (ESA) to collaborate on joint calibration, validation and scientific studies for earth observation missions.

In a statement, the Bengaluru-headquartered space agency said, "the agreement titled ESA–ISRO Arrangement concerning Joint Calibration and Validation Activities and Scientific Studies for Earth Observation Missions" was signed virtually on 4 March by ISRO Scientific Secretary M Ganesh Pillai and ESA Director for Earth Observation, Simonetta Cheli.

The arrangement strengthens their long-standing cooperation that began in 1978 and was renewed in 2002.

Cheli highlighted the importance of the collaboration in the context of upcoming Earth observation missions, particularly ESA's FLEX (Fluorescence Explorer) mission aimed at improving understanding of vegetation biology.

Pillai noted that the partnership between the two agencies spans several areas like Earth observation, navigation, ground station support and human spaceflight cooperation.

He also referred to ESA's support for India's space missions such as Chandrayaan and Aditya-L1, as well as collaboration through ISRO's deep space antenna facilities.

The agreement is expected to support future joint scientific studies and calibration campaigns for upcoming Earth observation missions, ISRO added. — *PTI*

The partnership between the two agencies spans areas like Earth observation, ground station support and human spaceflight— *REPRESENTATIONAL PIC*

**NITISH'S SON TO BECOME DY CM**

# Nishant to join JD(U) today

**PATNA, 7 MARCH**

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's son Nishant Kumar is all set to formally join the JD(U) on Sunday, marking a generational shift in party leadership, sources said.

Nishant's joining will take place at the party's headquarters here in the presence of senior leaders, ministers, MPs, MLAs and MLCs.

JD(U) MLA Hari Narayan Singh, a close aide of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, said on Saturday that a "unanimous" decision has been taken to make Nishant deputy CM in the new government.

Singh, also said that Nishant, who is entering politics in his late 40s, will be elected to the state legislative council next month.

The development comes two days after the JD(U) supremo filed nomination papers for the 16 March Rajya Sabha elections, marking a turning point in Bihar politics and bringing the curtain down on his tenure as the state's longest-serving CM.

Bihar CM Nitish Kumar and his son Nishant Kumar —*PTI*

- Nishant, who is now in his late 40s, will be elected to the council in April

"Nishant met party MLAs and MLCs at the residence of JD(U) working president Sanjay Jha here on Friday and discussed his future strategies. Nishant will enter active politics after formally joining the JD(U) on Sunday," a party source said.

Senior JD(U) leader Sharvan Kumar was the only Bihar minister who was present in the meeting, another source said.

JD(U) legislators had on Friday expressed their anguish to Nitish Kumar over his decision to move to Delhi as a Rajya Sabha MP, but had drawn solace from the entry of Nishant.

The party's members of the bicameral legislature and both Houses of Parliament, who had been taken aback by the sudden move of the JD(U) chief, got an opportunity to interact with the leader at a meeting on Friday evening at the Chief Minister's residence. —*PTI*

# World's greatest city to be built near Hyd: Revanth

**HYDERABAD, 7 MARCH**

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has said that the state government will build the "greatest city in the world" on the outskirts of Hyderabad, which would attract top businessmen like Elon Musk.

Speaking after the inauguration of Eco Hill Park at Kotwalguda here on Friday evening, he alleged that the opposition BRS is creating hurdles for the state government's development initiatives, including the rejuvenation of the polluted Musi river here. "We are building the greatest city in the world. This is just the beginning. The development that will take place here would make anyone in the world, from Elon Musk to Trump to come here... We were recently talking to business organisations related to Trump about coming here," he said.

Eric Swider, Director of Trump Media and Technology Corp, who attended the Telangana Rising Summit in December, had said his firms will be investing Rs 1 lakh crore in Telangana's "Bharat Future City" near here. — *PTI*

# 130 Maoists surrender in Hyd, Revanth calls on remaining to join mainstream

**HYDERABAD, 7 MARCH**

Ahead of the 31 March deadline set by the Centre, 130 Maoists surrendered before Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy here on Saturday.

The Maoists handed over 124 firearms, including AK-47 rifles and over 5,200 live ammunition, the highest in recent times in quality and in the number of weapons surrendered by the PLGA.

Of the 130 ultras, 125 belong to Chattisgarh, four are from Telangana, and one from Andhra Pradesh, DGP B Shivadhar Reddy said.

"Now there is no Telangana state committee of Maoists. It has completely vanished," the DGP told reporters.

The surrender of weapons has significantly weakened the operational and combat capability of the CPI (Maoist) in the region and has put an end to insurgency in the Central Regional Bureau (CRB) area, the DGP said.

The Maoists symbolically handed over their weapons to the chief minister. They belonged to the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA), which has now completely lost its existence, the DGP said. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, appealing to Maoists to join the mainstream, said 721 Maoists have surrendered in Telangana after January 2024.

He also said the Centre has allowed Telangana to provide healthcare, financial assistance, and housing to the surrendered ultras.

"I am calling upon Ganapathi, who is still underground, to surrender. Join the mainstream and become partners in the reconstruction of Telangana," he said.

He said he recently met the former Maoist leaders DevuJi, Damodar, and other Central Committee members, who presented some proposals, such as increasing the financial package to the surrendered ultras and that he had brought to the notice of Amit Shah. Asserting that the Congress government is sympathetic towards Naxalites, he said that if necessary, a committee will be formed to review all lpending cases against the Maoists. — *PTI*

## Kerala's longest backwater bridge opened in Alappuzha

**ALAPPUZHA, 7 MARCH**

Kerala's Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated the Perumbalam Bridge, the longest backwater bridge in the state, fulfilling a long-standing demand of island residents.

Built over the Vembanad Lake, the bridge connects Perumbalam Island to Arookutty panchayat, ending generations of travel hardships for locals. The new structure, costing Rs 100 crore with assistance from the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board, spans 1,155.40 metres with 27 spans and three arch spans to allow water transport. It features pedestrian walkways and scenic views. — *PTI*

# B'deshi boy jailed in 2005 freed

**KOLKATA, 7 MARCH**

The Calcutta High Court has ordered the immediate release and repatriation of a Bangladeshi prisoner, who was a minor when apprehended for illegal entry into India.

Pointing out that the maximum punishment that can be imposed on a juvenile under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act is seven years, the court on Thursday ordered that the man, now 36 years old, be set free. He has been in custody for over 21 years since his arrest in February, 2005.

Following an enquiry conducted in respect of the appellant's juvenility, the additional district and sessions judge submitted a report before the division bench.

It stated that an ossification test conducted on the appellant determined his age to be 36 years at present.

The division bench said that based on the report, the appellant was a minor as on 8 February, 2005, when he was arrested. The court directed the state to make efforts for the repatriation of the appellant back to his country of origin, Bangladesh.

The bench also ordered that another man, who was a juvenile when arrested 14 years ago, be set free on similar grounds. The court noted that the trial judge has concluded that the appellant was 15 years and 9 days when he was arrested. —*PTI*

# Badshah apologises, police plan LOC

**CHANDIGARH, 7 MARCH**

Police have initiated the process to issue a Look Out Circular (LOC) against rapper-musician Badshah (Aditya Prateek Singh) to prevent him from leaving the country, a day after he was booked for allegedly objectionable lyrics and visuals in his recently released Haryanvi music video, 'Tateeree'.

Meanwhile, Badshah uploaded a video on his Instagram handle, apologising if anyone's sentiments were hurt by his latest song.

The Panchkula police have issued a formal notice directing Badshah to appear before the police immediately. Police teams are conducting raids at various locations, the Haryana Police said in a statement on Saturday.

On Friday, police registered an FIR based on a complaint lodged by a Panchkula resident, alleging the use of objectionable lyrics and visuals in Badshah's music video.

Notices have been issued to remove the video from all social media platforms.

The police said the video depicts minor girls wearing school uniforms throwing away their school bags and appearing to run away from studies. — *PTI*

**HUMAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT**

# *M'rashtra to send 50 leopards to Vantara facility*

**MUMBAI, 7 MARCH**

The Maharashtra government has decided to send 50 leopards to Reliance Foundation's Vantara wildlife rescue and conservation centre in Jamnagar in Gujarat, sources close to state forest minister Ganesh Naik have said.

The forest department made the decision to strengthen conservation projects for the big cats while also addressing concerns about increasing human-leopard interactions in parts of Maharashtra, they said on Friday. Sources said the arrangement was finalised after discussions between Naik and the Vantara management.

Details about the timeline and modalities of transferring the leopards are expected to be finalised by the forest department

Some areas of Maharashtra witnessed a series of leopard attacks in November and December 2025. — *PTI*

## CANCER SURVIVOR CRACKS UPSC EXAM

**MAHASAMUND, 7 MARCH**

Overcoming a six-year battle with cancer, Sanjay Dahariya from Chhattisgarh's Mahasamund has secured the 946th rank in the UPSC Civil Services Examination 2025 in his third attempt.

The academic journey of Dahariya, son of a farmer from Beltukri, began at a local government school, but it took a significant turn when he was selected for Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Mana (Raipur), in Class 5. He joined the SBI in West Bengal in 2009 and resigned in 2011 to focus on his goals. However, in 2012, he was diagnosed with cancer in the salivary glands. Undeterred, Dahariya, who also suffers from minor vision impairment, joined another bank in Raipur.

He appeared for the UPSC Civil Services Examination in 2022, clearing it in the third attempt in 2025. — *PTI*

# Why did US allow India to buy Russian oil again?

The Trump administration's decision to ease sanctions on Russian oil sales to India in order to address potential supply issues has raised questions about Washington's resolve on the issue.

When President Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a trade agreement last month, a major component of the deal was India agreeing to stop purchasing Russian oil. Trump had repeatedly criticized India's purchases from Moscow.

However, in a major policy shift, the US announced on Friday a 30-day waiver to allow Indian refiners to buy Russian oil again.

"India is an essential partner of the United States, and we fully anticipate that New Delhi will ramp up purchases of US oil. This stop-gap measure will alleviate pressure caused by Iran's attempt to take global energy hostage," US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on social media.

PM Narendra Modi's government agreed to pull back from Russian oil purchases earlier this year amid sustained pressure from Trump administration —*PTI*

- Russia's energy revenues fell by around 20 per cent in 2024 as low oil prices and increasing sanctions, particularly from the US on Russian oil majors Rosneft and Lukoil, took their toll. The sanctions have meant an ever widening discount on Russian oil on global markets for the countries that do purchase it.

**WHY HAS THE US MADE THIS POLICY SHIFT?**

Global oil prices have surged in the wake of the US and Israeli attacks on Iran, with supplies drying up via the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz and with oil production disrupted across the region.

Given India's status as the world's third-largest crude importer, the US says it is trying to alleviate supply and price pressures by allowing it to resume purchases of Russian oil already available on the global market.

The temporary license given to Indian refiners covers Russian crude oil and petroleum products already loaded onto vessels before March 5, so long as they are delivered to India and purchased by an Indian company.

"The US government is simply looking for quick fixes to the global oil price issue," Ben Hilgenstock, a specialist on sanctions against Russia with the Kyiv School of Economics, told DW. "The Russian oil that is already floating around is obviously a prime candidate for that."

Bessent added in his statement that the "temporary" measure would help India without significantly boosting the Kremlin. "This deliberately short-term measure will not provide significant financial benefit to the Russian government as it only authorizes transactions involving oil already stranded at sea," he said.

**IS THIS A BIG DEAL FOR INDIA?**

Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, India was not a significant buyer of Russian oil. However, it ramped up purchases when Russian oil became much cheaper on international markets than the alternatives.

However, New Delhi agreed to pull back from those purchases earlier this year amid sustained pressure from the Trump administration. Hilgenstock says that decision was made easier by the fact that, at the time, global oil prices were low and India could still source relatively cheap options other than from Russia.

"The Trump administration was able to do this because the oil market was in a very different situation," says Hilgenstock.

"And they will be able to do this again after the Iran issue is over, whenever that may be, because the oil market fundamentally is still in a very different situation."

However, the move is likely to provide relief for Indian refiners. India is vulnerable to supply shocks and price hikes. Its crude stocks typically cover less than a month of demand, with refineries also holding limited inventories of other petroleum products.

"It's a saving grace for Indian refineries," Carole Nakhle, CEO of UK-based energy consultancy Crystol Energy, told DW. "It's not that they have reduced their purchases to zero, but they were looking for other sources of supply. It helps Indian buyers who were buying Russian oil."

Although India's oil minister Hardeep Singh Puri said this week the country was well-stocked despite "short-term disruptions arising from the Middle East", around half of the country's crude imports come through the Strait of Hormuz.

Indian refiners and the government had been considering a range of emergency measures to deal with possible supply shortages. Russia had already directed more cargoes towards Indian waters in anticipation of a possible reprieve.

Hilgenstock says the move is likely to lower prices and that it might as well be Indian buyers benefiting from that, given its importance as a crude import market.

"Everyone is having issues with supplies coming from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait and Iraq. Someone would have bought this oil anyway. And if it decreases the global price a little bit, then why not?"

**HAS INDIA REALLY STOPPED PURCHASING RUSSIAN OIL?**

Since the US dropped tariffs on India in return for the country to stop buying Russian oil in early February, Indian refiners had reduced purchases from Russia by around half from the peak in June 2025. A continuing decline in purchases was expected before the US and Israeli bombing of Iran began.

India replaced that oil with purchases from the Middle East, especially from Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

**WILL THE REPRIEVE HELP RUSSIA?**

If the 30-day reprieve is not extended, it's unlikely to make much material difference for Russia, analysts say.

Both Hilgenstock and Nakhle say that other countries, such as China or others in Asia, would have likely purchased the oil anyway, and that now it is simply headed for India instead. "The ultimate question is how long this is going to take," says Hilgenstock. "If it's a month or two, it's fine. It gives Russia some breathing space, but it doesn't solve any of the fundamental issues that they have." Russia's energy revenues fell by around 20 per cent in 2024 as low oil prices and increasing sanctions, particularly from the US on Russian oil majors Rosneft and Lukoil, took their toll. The sanctions have meant an ever widening discount on Russian oil on global markets for the countries that do purchase it. Hilgenstock says that before the Iran attacks began, the situation for Russian oil was bleak, with its benchmark selling for as low as $30 a barrel. "That's very, very bad," he said.

While Russia may benefit temporarily from supply and price shocks caused by the conflict in the Middle East, he expects market fundamentals to be restored as soon as the current conflict ends — particularly if sanctions remain in place.

However, Hilgenstock said it was also important to remember that the appetite for sanctions — from the US or otherwise — was only going to be as strong as market conditions would allow.

"Every time there is trouble in the market, they go back on their promises and loosen restrictions — that argument can certainly be made," he said. —*DW News*

# SALAR ساہر

## Guv Ravi & his battle of wits against Stalin's govt

When retired, top IPS officer RN Ravi became the 26th Governor of Tamil Nadu on 18 September, 2021, few would have thought that his tenure would go down in history as one witnessing the most confrontations with the elected government.

Be it the clearing Bills passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly, the appointment of Vice-chancellors or policy-driven fights with the DMK regime-- including the one over the National Education Policy (NEP), Ravi did not give up and firmly held on to his views.

The most striking outcome of the wrangles Ravi had with the DMK regime was the Supreme Court declaring, in the matter of Presidential Reference, that timelines cannot be stipulated for Governors or the President and that there was no concept of 'deemed assent.'

In 2023, on his own, he infamously "dismissed" the then Minister V Senthilbalaji from the Council of Ministers following his arrest by the ED, and quickly put that decision on hold following the Centre's reported advice to him. He had said that Balaji's continuation in the Cabinet would "adversely impact the due process of law including fair investigation that may eventually lead to a breakdown of the Constitutional machinery in the state."

The tug-of-war ensued between him and the DMK regime over pending Bills and several other issues. It includes the prosecution of former AIADMK ministers, including BV Ramanaa and C Vijaya Bhaskar. In the matter of appointing VCs to state varsities, he mandated a UGC nominee in the Search/Selection Committee and said it conformed with a Supreme Court decision.

However, the state government said it was following relevant laws and that a UGC nominee was unwarranted.

On 25 October, 2023, a petrol bomb was thrown near the Raj Bhavan main gate which took the fight between Ravi and the DMK regime to a new level. The Governor's office had then alleged verbal attacks and threats to the Governor were mostly from leaders and workers of ruling DMK and its allies in their public meetings and through their social media.

Raj Bhavan had alleged: "...a studied indifference by the police to serious threats against the Honorable Governor has vitiated the security of the Hon'ble Governor and Raj Bhavan... brazen bomb attacks on the Raj Bhavan are a consequence of it."

In 2022, when he was on his way to attend a function at the Dharmapuram Adhinam, Raj Bhavan alleged that sticks and stones were hurled at his convoy to target the Governor. "A complaint was lodged by Raj Bhavan, but an FIR was not registered. No action was taken against the assailants," the Governor's office later claimed.

Karukka Vinoth, a history-sheeter was convicted and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment by a special court for NIA cases in the Raj Bhavan petrol bomb attack case.

Ravi's tenure was not only about controversies; he also tried to innovate and organised many events at the Lok Bhavan including the 'Think to Dare Series,' a conclave of higher education institutions and facilitated a cultural study tour for students of the University of Lucknow. He regularly interacted with students.

The outgoing Governor has also been accused often by the proponents of the Dravidian ideology of attempting to "appropriate" Tamil icons such as saint-poet Thiruvalluvar and revolutionary saint Vallalar and portray them as belonging to the Bharatiya Sanatan tradition. Ravi regularly honoured a portrait of Thiruvallur in saffron with sacred ashes and also observed the traditional Vaikasi Anusham star --to honour Thiruvalluvar-- much to the chagrin of Dravidian ideologists.

He criticised G U Pope and Bishop Caldwell, alleging they tried to destroy the spirituality and identity of Tamil Nadu, which he hailed as the spiritual capital of India. He said that to write a parallel history of Tamil Nadu, a false narrative of racial division—of separate Dravidian and Aryan races—was created, seeking to strike at the foundational pillars of the Dravidian ideology.

Ravi never missed an opportunity to emphasise nationalism and national consciousness and he once lamented that PhDs had been awarded for theses focused only on a handful of Dravidian ideology icons.

Ravi repeatedly walking out of the Assembly and skipping the government prepared texts during his customary addresses had never been witnessed before.

He touched a political raw nerve when he advocated the term 'Tamilakam' instead of Tamil Nadu, sparking strong protests from the ruling party and several others. He regularly levelled allegations against the DMK government on several issues including crimes against Dalits. He renamed Durbar hall in Lok Bhavan as Bharathiar Mandapam. Ravi has been transferred and posted as Governor of West Bengal. His Kerala counterpart RV Arlekar has been given additional charge of Tamil Nadu. —*PTI*

There was a constant tug-of-war ensued between RN Ravi and MK Stalin-led DMK regime over pending Bills and several other issues —*ANI*

## LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

# *Israeli-US war with Iran shatters the fragile peace in Lebanon*

Following the killing of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Hezbollah retaliated by firing rockets into northern Israel, prompting Israel to carry out fresh strikes on Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon, Beirut and the Bekaa Valley.

Although the Iran-backed Shiite paramilitary group is no longer as powerful as it once was, it still retains the capacity to drag Lebanon into renewed conflict and instability.

Hezbollah is unlikely to play a decisive military role in Iran's confrontation with the United States and Israel. However, its actions could still destabilise Lebanon and create conditions that might encourage Israel or Syria to launch ground invasions and occupy parts of the country.

**A FAILED CEASEFIRE**

Hezbollah's support for Iran follows the group's long-standing ideological foundations. Inspired by the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Hezbollah formally emerged in 1985 with a manifesto outlining its objectives. It pledged allegiance to the supreme leader of the Iranian Revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini, and vowed to resist Israeli occupation in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories.

For nearly four decades, Hezbollah has exercised enormous influence over Lebanese politics and foreign policy. However, the organisation has been significantly weakened since October 2023, when Israeli strikes eliminated large sections of its leadership. Many in Lebanon hoped this would loosen the group's grip on the country.

On November 27, 2024, Israel and Hezbollah agreed to a ceasefire after nearly a year of cross-border violence. Hezbollah had launched attacks in solidarity with Hamas following the October 7, 2023 assault on Israel, while Israel responded with sustained shelling.

Under the ceasefire arrangement, Hezbollah was expected to withdraw its fighters north of the Litani River, while Israeli troops would pull back from southern Lebanon within 60 days.

**A BORDER STILL IN CONFLICT**

The agreement, brokered by the United States, was never fully implemented. Israel continued conducting strikes in Lebanon, claiming the Lebanese army was moving too slowly to disarm Hezbollah.

Disarmament was one of the key provisions of the ceasefire deal, but implementing it has proven difficult. The Lebanese army recently said it had entered an "advanced stage" of the process and is expanding its presence in southern Lebanon. Israel, however, has criticised the pace of progress, accusing Hezbollah of rearming faster than it is being disarmed.

Israel strikes a building in Beirut's Dahiyeh, Lebanon —*PTI*

Hezbollah's secretary general Naim Qassem has repeatedly rejected calls for complete disarmament or withdrawal north of the Litani River while Israeli strikes on Lebanon continue.

Since November 2024, Israeli forces have carried out around 855 strikes in Lebanon. In February 2026 alone, there were 44 attacks, even before the latest escalation began.

Earlier this year, Qassem warned that Hezbollah would not remain neutral if Israel entered into war with Iran. After Khamenei's killing, the group acted on that pledge by launching rockets into Israel.

However, the move has drawn criticism from many in Lebanon, who accuse Hezbollah of prioritising Iran's interests over Lebanon's stability and undermining an already fragile peace process.

**DRAGGING LEBANON INTO WAR**

Hezbollah has previously drawn Lebanon into devastating conflicts. In July 2006, the group crossed into Israeli territory, killing three Israeli soldiers and capturing two in an attempt to secure the release of Lebanese prisoners.

The incident trig gered a 34-day war with Israel that left more than 1,000 Lebanese civilians dead and caused widespread destruction to the country's infrastructure and economy. More recently, after the 7 October, 2023 attacks by Hamas on Israel, Hezbollah pledged solidarity with Palestinian militants despite repeated appeals from the Lebanese government to remain neutral. Months of cross-border exchanges eventually escalated into full-scale war in September 2024.

Hanaa, 7, displaced by Israeli airstrikes in Dahiyeh, writes in a notebook while wrapped in a blanket in Beirut, Lebanon—*PTI*

In the current crisis, Lebanon's government has tried to distance itself from Hezbollah's actions. Following the group's rocket attacks on northern Israel, the Lebanese cabinet on March 2 banned Hezbollah's military activities. The decision marks a major shift. For decades, Lebanon had effectively tolerated Hezbollah's armed presence and shared certain security responsibilities with the organisation, even though such powers are typically reserved for the state. It remains unclear what impact the ban will have. So far, it appears to have had little immediate effect, as Hezbollah continues its operations in support of Iran.

**SECTARIAN TENSIONS**

While intended to strengthen the Lebanese state and isolate Hezbollah, the ban risks worsening Lebanon's sectarian divisions. The wider region is already experiencing heightened sectarian tensions. Violence against Alawites, a sect linked to Shiite Islam, in neighbouring Syria has heightened fears among Shiite communities. In Lebanon, Shiites make up one-third of the population and have borne the brunt of both Israel's decades-long occupation of southern Lebanon and the destruction caused by the 2024 war. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

## Pak man convicted over Iran-linked plot to kill Trump

**NEW YORK, 7 MARCH**

A Pakistani man linked to Iran has been convicted for plotting to assassinate US President Donald Trump and other officials. Asif Raza Merchant, 48, was found guilty of murder for hire and attempting terrorism crossing borders, and faces up to life imprisonment. US authorities stated Merchant arrived in April 2024, met with undercover officers in June, and planned to kill Trump, with other targets including Biden and Nikki Haley. Merchant, a trained IRGC operative, admitted he was sent to the US to organise political assassinations, motivated by revenge for Soleimani's death. He was arrested before leaving the country in July 2024. The scheme aimed to strike at US democracy and was driven by Iranian regime vengeance. —*PTI*

## Pak court jails 47 PTI supporters for 10 years

**ISLAMABAD, 7 MARCH**

An anti-terrorism court in Rawalpindi has sentenced 47 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders and supporters to 10 years imprisonment and a fine of PKR 5,00,000 each, in absentia, over vandalism during the 9 May, 2023 protest. The protest was sparked by Imran Khan's arrest, with supporters attempting to storm the GHQ in Rawalpindi, damaging property including the Army Museum and Metro Station. The court, presided over by Judge Amjad Ali Shah, found them guilty of arson, vandalism, and attacks on police. The convicted include Omar Ayub Khan, Shibli Faraz, Shahbaz Gill, Zulfi Bukhari, among others. The broader case involves 118 accused, including Khan and Shah Mahmood Qureshi. Khan remains in Adiala Jail facing multiple cases. —*PTI*

## 15 terrorists killed in Pakistan's Balochistan

**ISLAMABAD, 7 MARCH**

Pakistani security forces killed 15 militants in two intelligence-led operations in Balochistan. The first, in Harnai, resulted in 12 deaths after engaging a Khawarij hideout. In Basima, saw three terrorists killed in a gunfight. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were recovered from the slain militants. Balochistan faces a persistent low-level insurgency, with groups like TTP and Baloch Liberation Army targeting security forces. The Pakistani government designated TTP as "Fitna al-Khawarij", referencing a historic violent Islamic group. The army confirmed the operations aimed to target insurgents responsible for ongoing attacks, maintaining security and stability in the province. —*PTI*

## 23 killed in Kenyan floods, flights disrupted

**NAIROBI, 7 MARCH**

Heavy overnight rains caused flooding in Kenya's capital, killing twenty three and damaging over 100 vehicles. The floods stranded motorists for hours, with some overturning on roads and parking bays. Kenya Airways diverted some flights to Mombasa, with disruptions expected to continue. The military was deployed to support rescue efforts, while the toll road waived fees on an elevated route. Videos showed submerged homes and overturned vehicles. Kenya Red Cross teams worked tirelessly to assist stranded residents, with search and rescue operations ongoing. Kenya's Public Service Minister urged caution, as recent rains have caused landslides and mudslides, displacing thousands. Residents blamed clogged drainage for the flooding, criticising authorities' infrastructure preparedness. —*PTI*

# PM, rapper, mayor: The rise of Balen

### He is Gen-Z's favourite after last year's protests in Nepal

Former mayor of Kathmandu, Balen Shah is the popular choice to be Nepal's next Prime Minister —*PTI*

**DUBAI, 7 MARCH**

Balendra Shah 'Balen', the rapper-turned-politician who won Kathmandu's 2022 mayoral polls as an Independent, has become the face of a generational change, symbolising a break from Nepal's traditional parties.

The 35-year-old engineer was a popular choice to lead the interim government after Gen Z youths toppled the Oli-led coalition government in September last year, following two-day nationwide violent protests against corruption and a ban on social media. But Balen declined to lead the interim government, saying he would rather be elected for a full term

**TRANSFORMATIVE MAYOR**

As the Kathmandu Metropolitan City Mayor, Balen is credited with sweeping reform programmes and the beautification of the metropolis. However, Balen's mayoral tenure was not without controversy. "He faced flak when there were widespread demolitions. He was also accused of not sending a fire brigade when Gen Z protesters resorted to arson," said a critic.

**MUSIC CAPTURED GEN Z LOVE**

Balen turned to rap music during his education days. His music is described as reflective on social themes and ground struggles. Hence, when former prime minister KP Sharma Oli banned social media, Balen was amongst the prominent voices to protest.

**DECENTRALISATION**

Noting that even after the introduction of federalism, power remained centralised in the capital city, Kathmandu, Balen said at a public gathering, "You should be travelling to Kathmandu to visit lord Pashupatinath or Swoyambhu Stupa, but not for government works."

The sentiment was reflected in the RSP's manifesto, called the 100-point commitment, which promised online government service delivery to be provided to people and building a neutral, professional and accountable public service by disassociating bureaucracy from politics. —*PTI*

# Hormuz closure: Pak hikes fuel prices

**ISLAMABAD, 7 MARCH**

—FREEPIK

In the post-Iran war economic shock, the Pakistan government has increased petrol and high-speed diesel prices by PKR 55 per litre each, the highest-ever hike.

Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb announced the hike with the consolation that the country has sufficient petroleum reserves in a late night presser.

As a result of the hike, the ex-depot price of high-speed diesel was fixed at PKR 335.86 per litre for the coming week, up by about 20 per cent from PKR 280.86 per litre. Likewise, the ex-depot price of petrol was revised to PKR 321.17 per litre from PKR 266.17 per litre, reflecting an increase of around 17 per cent.

Malik noted that Pakistan was dependent on oil supplies passing through the Strait of Hormuz, which were affected by the ongoing conflict. He also shared that two Pakistani oil vessels were coming through alternative routes.

Malik said the government would now review petroleum prices on a weekly basis.

This comes after the government on Friday shelved a proposed national action plan for work from home and distance learning measures, and instead decided to keep normal activities unchanged for at least a week.

Meanwhile, Bangladeshi Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood said that his country had adequate fuel stocks, but warned petrol stations: "Do not supply extra fuel oil to anyone. Fuel cannot be given in amounts exceeding normal demand". Dhaka saw people rushing to fuel stations to stock up. —*Agencies*

# Russia provided Iran with intel to help Tehran strike US military

**DUBAI, 7 MARCH**

Russia has provided Iran with information that could help Tehran strike American warships, aircraft and other assets in the region, two officials said. This is the first indication that Moscow is involved in the war.

Much of the intelligence Russia has shared with Iran has been imagery from Moscow's sophisticated constellation of overhead satellites, CNN reported.

Iran has provided Russia thousands of Shahed drones after Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine. However, Russia did not get involved during Iran's 12-war with Israel last June, despite US bombing nuclear sites in the Islamic Republic.

Israel has also said that Iran has fired cluster munitions toward the country and its police, and on Friday. This has raised speculations that Russia and even China have supplied weaponry or knowledge to Iran, but there has been no confirmation.

Proponents of a ban on cluster munitions say they kill indiscriminately and endanger civilians long after their use. Israel has used cluster munitions in previous wars in Lebanon, as have as Russia and Syria. The US is believed to have last used them in 2003 in Iraq, but continues to keep them in its arsenal.

However, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth dismissed the reports of Russian involvement on CBS' '60 Minutes' stating that the US is "tracking everything" and factoring it into battle plans.

"The American people can rest assured their Commander-in-Chief is well aware of who's talking to who," Hegseth said. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump dodged a question when asked about the alleged involvement.

**PUTIN DIALS IRANIAN PREZ**

Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the phone on Friday and expressed condolences over the killing of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and "numerous civilian casualties resulting from the US and Israel's armed aggression."

In the call, the first reported by the Kremlin since the start of the war, Putin "reaffirmed Russia's principled stance in favour of an immediate cessation of hostilities, the rejection of force.... and a swift return to the path of diplomatic resolution". Pezeshkian thanked Putin.

**TRUMP RAMPS UP DEFENCE PRODUCTION**

Facing questions about whether the Iran war is depleting certain US stockpiles, the President said on that top defence manufacturers "have agreed to quadruple production" of "exquisite" weapons. The term describeS more unique, expensive or technically complex weapons, like hypersonic missiles or long-range air interceptors, which are held in lower numbers than traditional munitions. —*PTI*

WEST ASIA WAR DAY-8

Satellite images from Airbus Defence and Space appear to show THAAD systems allegedly damaged by Iran drones at Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan —*PRESS TV*

**Emirates said it 'will resume operations' after being closed for nearly a week.**

**$151 million arms will be sold by US to Israel. This includes 12,000 1,000-pound bombs.**

## 41 killed in Israeli strikes on Lebanon

**BEIRUT, 7 MARCH**

Overnight Israeli airstrikes in the Lebanese mountain town of Nabi Chit killed at least 41 and wounded 40 others, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported on Saturday.

Only around four of the deceased were Lebanese soldiers, it stated, although it is unclear if the other deceased were part of the militant group Hezbollah.

The Iranian-backed militant group Hezbollah said its fighters clashed with an Israeli force that landed late on Friday in the mountains of eastern Lebanon.

NNA said that Israeli forces quickly evacuated after the strikes. Israel has also continued to bombard the neighbouring villages.

The Israeli force said it was looking for information about Israeli navigator Ron Arad, who went missing after his fighter jet crashed in Lebanon over 40 years ago —*PTI*

Smoke rises after an Israeli airstrike in the Dahiyeh area of Beirut on Thursday —*PTI*

# War will bring down economies: Qatar

**DUBAI, 7 MARCH**

Qatar's Energy Minister Saad al-Kaabi has warned that the escalating conflict in West Asia could severely damage the global economy, cautioning that a prolonged war could disrupt Gulf energy exports and push oil prices to USD 150 a barrel.

In an interview with the Financial Times, al-Kaabi said the conflict risked triggering widespread economic disruption if energy shipments from the Gulf were halted. Benchmark US crude rose above USD 90 a barrel on Friday for the first time in more than two years.

Writing for the Qatar-funded broadcaster Al Jazeera, regional analyst Sultan al-Khulaifi said Iran risked a "strategic miscalculation of historic proportions" by widening the conflict to Gulf states.

He argued that such actions could shift the war from an Israel-Iran confrontation to a broader conflict between Iran and its Arab neighbours.

Associated Press published footage showing explosions and smoke rising over western Tehran after Israeli forces launched a fresh wave of strikes on the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Iran's UN ambassador said the country would take "all necessary measures" to defend itself.

The fighting has already killed at least 1,230 people in Iran, more than 200 in Lebanon and 11 in Israel, while six US troops have also died.

The United Kingdom said the US had begun using British bases for defensive operations to stop Iranian missile launches. Meanwhile, Iran warned that any US ships entering the Gulf would ultimately "go to the bottom of the sea". —*PTI*

## Munir meets Saudi Defence Minister

Pakistan's Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir travelled to Saudi Arabia and met Defence Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman to discuss the security situation. Pakistan and Saudi had signed a defence pact last year where one nation would come to the defence of the other if attacked by a third country. Pakistan is currently fighting with Afghanistan, while Saudi has been battered by Iranian drones. Salman posted on X that the both countries focused on ways to stop Iranian attacks.

## US to deploy drone system from Ukraine

An American anti-drone system proven to work against Russian drones in Ukraine will soon be sent to the Middle East to bolster US defences against Iranian drones, two US officials said on Friday. The Patriot and THAAD missile systems have had limited success in combating Iranian missiles. Hence, the US is sending the Merops, which is small enough to fit on a pickup truck, and uses AI to navigate.

## Pahlavi says he will lead Iran's transition

Exiled Iranian Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi said he accepted a "mandate" from Iranians to lead a transitional process once the Islamic Republic collapses, as he condemned Iran for striking Arab nations. "The Iranian people have called on me to lead the transition after the regime is gone. I have accepted that responsibility. Part of their great mandate to me is to return our nation and our foreign relations to normalcy," he said on X.

## 'US attack on Iranian ship was lawful'

The US submarine attack on an Iranian warship near Sri Lanka does not appear to have violated international or American military law as US struck a military vessel, legal experts said. It's unclear if the US sub took sufficient measures to rescue the nearly three dozen survivors. Eighty-seven people died in the attack. However, Iran's UN Ambassador, Amir-Saeid Iravani, said the attack on the IRIS Dena was a violation of international law.

**OVER EPSTEIN TIES**

# *Carney says Andrew should be removed from line of succession*

**TOKYO, 7 MARCH**

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said former prince **Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor** should be removed from the royal line of succession. Speaking to reporters in Tokyo, Carney said Andrew's "deplorable" actions have caused him to be stripped of his royal titles and "necessitate" his removal from the line of succession.

Despite being stripped of his status as prince in October over his close links with the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, Andrew remains eighth in line to become monarch.

Carney, a former governor of the Bank of England, said that even though Mountbatten-Windsor is "well down" the line of succession, the "point of principle stands."

Andrew's brother, King Charles III, is the head of state in Canada, which is a member of the Commonwealth of former British colonies.

Carney noted that a specific constitutional framework exists to remove someone from the line of succession. He insisted this established protocol should be followed, rather than an immediate dismissal.

Under the current royal line of succession, Prince William is first in line. He is followed by his three children: Prince George, Princess Charlotte, and Prince Louis. —*PTI*

# Russian barrage kills 7 in Ukraine

**KYIV, 7 MARCH**

At least seven people were killed and 10 others, including three children, were wounded on Saturday by a Russian missile that hit a five-story residential building in Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, officials said.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Russia struck Ukraine overnight with 29 missiles and 480 drones, targeting energy facilities in Kyiv and other central regions and with damage reported in at least seven other locations across the country.

Air defence systems downed 19 missiles and 453 drones, with hits from 9 missiles and 26 strike drones recorded at 22 locations.

Russia has fired tens of thousands of Iranian-designed Shahed drones at Ukrain in just over four years.

Firefighters battle a blaze at an apartment building after a Russian missile strike in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on Saturday—*PTI*

The war in the West Asia has drawn international attention away from Europe's biggest conflict since World War II, and forced the postponement of a new round of US-brokered talks between Russia and Ukraine.

Earlier, Zelenskyy said that the US requested for support in defending against the Iranian drones in West Asia. President Zelenskyy had given the order for equipment to be provided along with Ukrainian experts. —*PTI*

# After LPG hike, govt says no rise in petrol & diesel rates

## Domestic LPG price sees second hike in a year

A man carries an LPG cylinder in Bengaluru –*MOHAMMED ASAD*

**NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH**

Hours after the steep hike in cooking gas prices, the government on Saturday said petrol and diesel rates are unlikely to be increased immediately, as state-run oil companies have enough financial strength to absorb the impact of rising global energy costs.

Top government sources said three fuel marketing companies — Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) — had posted bumper profits earlier this year, giving them sufficient financial muscle to cushion the effect of higher crude prices.

Retail petrol and diesel prices have remained unchanged since April 2022, with fuel retailers absorbing losses when crude prices are high and recovering margins when rates fall.

LPG prices were raised for the second time in 11 months. Cooking gas rates were last increased by Rs 50 in April last year, while commercial LPG prices used by hotels and restaurants have risen by Rs 302.50 so far this year.

Global energy markets have surged following the escalation of the West Asia conflict. Tanker movement through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow but crucial sea lane between Iran and Oman, has slowed sharply, disrupting oil and gas shipments from the region.

Since the conflict erupted on 28 February, US crude has surged 35.63 per cent, marking the biggest weekly gain since futures trading began in 1983.

Asian spot prices for liquefied natural gas (LNG) have also climbed to around USD 25.40 per million British thermal units, a three-year high and more than double last week's levels amid fears of supply disruptions and halted exports from Qatar. —*PTI*

### HIKED LPG PRICES

**DOMESTIC LPG**

| CITY | PRICE BEFORE 7 MARCH | NEW PRICE |
|---|---|---|
| Delhi | ₹853 | ₹913 |
| Mumbai | ₹852.50 | ₹912.50 |
| Kolkata | ₹852.50 | ₹912.50 |
| Chennai | ₹868.50 | ₹928.50 |

**COMMERCIAL LPG**

| CITY | PRICE BEFORE 7 MARCH | NEW PRICE |
|---|---|---|
| Delhi | ₹1,768.50 | ₹1,883 |
| Mumbai | ₹1,720.50 | ₹1,835 |
| Kolkata | ₹1,875.50 | ₹1,990 |
| Chennai | ₹1,929 | ₹2,043.50 |

## TN HOTELS BODY URGES CENTRE TO WITHDRAW COMMERCIAL LPG SUSPENSION

**NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH**

The Tamil Nadu Hotels Association, a body representing the hotels and restaurants in the state, has appealed to the Centre to withdraw its order instructing oil marketing companies to suspend commercial LPG cylinders.

While understanding that the government has issued such an order arising out of the conflict in the West Asiaern countries, the association's President M Venkadasubbu, stressed that such a decision would severely affect the hotels and eateries and large number of people employed in the sector.

"Hotels and restaurants are primarily dependent on using commercial gas cylinders. Therefore, if the supply of these commercial gas cylinders is not regularised, hotels and eateries will be forced to suspend their operations," he said in a statement here on Saturday. —*PTI*

# India to source gas from Aus & Canada

**NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH**

With India exploring alternative sources to further strengthen its energy security, countries like Australia, Canada and several others have offered additional gas supplies, official sources said on Saturday.

Citing the ongoing US-Israel conflict with Iran leading to the closure of the key shipping route through the Strait of Hormuz, sources said the passage is not the only route for India's crude imports and asserted that the days of dependence on a single maritime chokepoint are long over.

They noted that supplies from Russia, West Africa, the Americas, Central Asia, and non-Gulf Middle Eastern routes have ensured that disruption in any single corridor results in a managed sourcing adjustment, rather than a supply emergency.

Only around 40 per cent of India's crude imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, while about 60 per cent are routed through other supply routes that remain unaffected, they said.

- Only around 40 per cent of India's crude imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, while about 60 per cent are routed through other supply routes that remain unaffected.

This has ensured that there has been no shortage of energy for Indian consumers even during global turmoil or the pandemic, sources said.

Several countries, including Australia and Canada, have also offered additional gas supplies, and India continues to explore alternative sources to further strengthen energy security, they said.

India has also recently entered into new energy supply arrangements with partners such as the United States and the United Arab Emirates to ensure stable long-term supplies. —*PTI*

## West Asia crisis risks $11.8B farm exports: GTRI

**NEW DELHI 27 FEB**

India's agro and food products exports worth USD 11.8 billion to West Asia are at risk as the conflict in the region is disrupting shipping routes, raising insurance costs and creating uncertainty in logistics."The conflict iss disrupting shipping routes, raising insurance costs and creating uncertainty in logistics," the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said. In 2025, India exported about USD 11.8 billion of agricultural and food products to West Asia, accounting for 21.8 per cent of India's total exports in this sector. The Gulf region's geographic proximity and large expatriate Indian population have historically made it a natural market for India's food exports. —*PTI*

## EPS-95 pensioners to protest for '7,500 hike

**NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH**

Pensioners under the Employees' Pension Scheme 1995 (EPS-95) will start a 3-day protest at Jantar Mantar on 9 March for a minimum monthly pension hike to Rs 7,500 from the existing Rs 1,000. The EPS-95 National Agitation Committee, led by President Commander Ashok Raut, continues its nine-year struggle for higher retirement benefits. Representing 8.2 million pensioners across the public, private, and media sectors, the committee is demanding an increase in the minimum monthly pension, plus dearness allowance. Appeals have been made to the Prime Minister, Union Ministers, and MPs from all parties. But the government is ignoring the cries of elderly pensioners and making hollow claims, the committee said —*PTI*

## Women to make up 35% of Vedanta's staff

**NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH**

Vedanta Group is targeting to increase women representation across all organisational levels to 35 per cent from 23 per cent at present. The company has also planned a nationwide campaign #HerAtTheCore and a LinkedIn-led hiring drive inviting women to build careers across mining, metals, oil and gas, power and technology, a statement said. Quoting Annual Survey of Industries, Vedanta said women accounted for around 18 per cent of direct employment across industries in 2023-24, while in core sectors such as mining and metals, their share remained only 6 per cent. The company is also redesigning systems, deploying advanced technologies and building life-stage support frameworks to enable women thrive in core industries, Priya Agarwal Hebbar, Vedanta's Non-Executive Director said. —*PTI*

## India to train 85K semiconductor engineers

**NEW DELHI, 27 FEB**

Under the India Semiconductor Mission's (ISM) 'Chips to Startups' (C2S) initiative, the government is prioritizing talent development through specialized training and workforce upskilling. Union Minister for Electronics and IT, Ashwini Vaishnaw, announced that India has made significant progress toward its 10-year goal of training 85,000 semiconductor design engineers, having achieved major milestones in just the last four years. Vaishnaw further noted that world-class Electronic Design Automation (EDA) tools—supported by industry leaders such as Synopsys, Cadence, Siemens, Renesas, Ansys, and AMD—are now available to students across 315 academic institutions nationwide. With the help of these tools, students are getting practical experience on designing semiconductor chips, Ministry of Electronics and IT said in a statement. —*ANI*

## Ports asked to consider waiving fee

**MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH**

Union Shipping, Ports and Waterways Ministry has proposed that ports may consider requests regarding reduction, waiver or remission of charges, including change of vessel charge, and also rolled out a standard operating procedure (SoP) for them to deal with issues arising from the West Asia crisis.

As part of the SoP that followed extensive consultations with all stakeholders on Friday, each port will appoint a nodal officer at the level of head of department or deputy head of department, who will be the single point of contact for addressing the issues coming up for consideration at

ports. The nodal officer will be responsible for taking up the matter with the competent authority and ensure that the action is taken within 24-72 hours.

Also, as per the SoP, port chairpersons should have periodical meetings with stakeholders such as shipping lines, exporters, terminal operators, customs, among others to closely monitor the situation and ascertain and address legitimate concerns.

Meanwhile, the government has granted certain relaxations to exporters in fulfilling their export obligations, as the trading community is facing difficulties in the movement of goods due to the ongoing West Asia crisis, according to a notification.

Under Export Promotion Capital Goods scheme, domestic firms are allowed to import duty-free machines but they have to meet certain export obligations against that.

This relaxation is in addition to the existing facility already available under foreign trade policy upon payment of composition fees, it said. —*PTI*

## Oil price surges to highest since 2023

**NEW YORK, 7 MARCH**

Oil shot to its highest price since 2023 after surging again Friday because of the Iran war and a weak update on the US job market knocked stocks lower.

The price of Brent crude oil averaged USD 83 per barrel in 2023.

The S&P 500 dropped 1.3 per cent after a report showed US employers cut more jobs last month than they created and after oil prices spiked above USD 90 per barrel.

The price for a barrel of Brent crude leapt another 8.5 per cent to settle at USD 92.69. It briefly rose above USD 94 to touch its highest level since September 2023.

A barrel of benchmark US crude breached the USD 90 level for the first time since 2023 and jumped 12.2 per cent to USD 90.90.

Oil prices have surged, with

Brent up from near USD 70 late last week, as the war has expanded and included areas critical to the production and movement of oil and gas in West Asia.

Much will depend on what happens with the Strait of Hormuz off Iran's coast, where roughly a fifth of the world's oil sails.

The US government gave details about President Donald Trump's plan to offer insurance to ships crossing the strait, but it had little effect on the market.

If oil prices spike to USD 100 per barrel, some analysts and investors say it could be too much for the global economy to withstand. —*PTI*

## Barring 8 days, Andhra relied on borrowings from RBI in 2024: CAG

**AMARAVATI, 7 MARCH**

The Andhra Pradesh government availed Rs 1.72 lakh crore through special drawing, ways and means advances and overdraft during 2024-25, ending up paying Rs 303 crore towards interest, according to a CAG report.

The Comptroller and Auditor General report, which was tabled in the Assembly, on Friday said the state government maintained the minimum cash balance with the Reserve Bank of India for only eight days without availing any WMA from RBI.

The government's revenue deficit exceeded the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) target of 2.7 per cent of GSDP, remaining at 3.75 per cent even in

2024-25. This forced the state to borrow for day-to-day expenses increasing its interest burden, the CAG report added.

The fiscal deficit remained at 5.05 per cent against the mandated 4 per cent ceiling, driving total borrowings to Rs 81,071 crore, severely restricting fiscal space for future growth. TDP Spokesperson Neelayapalem Vijay Kumar said the dependence on RBI loans was due to legacy issues left by the previous government, such as unpaid bills to contractors and employees, among others. —*PTI*

**WOMEN'S DAY**

## '67% women say pay parity exists'

**MUMBAI, 7 MARCH**

Over 67 per cent of women in India across sectors believe that pay parity exists at workplaces, while 33 per cent feel there is pay gap, a Naukri.com report said.

The report 'What Women Professionals Want' is based on a survey involving 50,000 women across more than 50 industries in the country.

Professionals in real estate (42 per cent) strongly believe in existence of non pay parity, followed by FMCG (38 per cent), pharmaceutical and life sciences (38 per cent), and automobiles (37 per cent).

Demand for equal pay audits

and menstrual leave rose to 27 per cent from 19 per cent in the previous year.

Nearly 50 per cent of respondents hid their personal plans, such as marriage or maternity plans, fearing bias. Nearly 42 per cent of respondents said that bias in hiring and promotions is the biggest challenge they face at the workplace

However, 83 per cent of the respondents feel encouraged to pursue leadership roles, especially in the southern states. —*PTI*

**TOOL TO TRACK JOBS**

## *White-collar roles most exposed to AI: Anthropic*

**SAN FRANCISCO, 7 MARCH**

Anthropic, the maker of the AI chatbot Claude, claims to have built an early warning system to track which jobs in the US are most exposed to artificial intelligence. Its initial findings suggest many white-collar roles sit near the front lines.

The company's latest research arrives amid mounting fears that AI is displacing young job-seekers. Meanwhile, seasoned white-collar workers are increasingly concerned about long-term security as corporations like Amazon and Block cite the technology as a factor in recent layoffs.

Anthropic's researchers tracked the gap between AI's capabilities and how the technology is actually being used by workers across professions. The analysis found "limited evidence that AI has affected employment to date."

Early fears that AI is responsible for rising joblessness among young college grads may also be overblown, the researchers said, noting only "suggestive evidence that hiring of younger workers has slowed in exposed occupations."

Professions that are considered to be more "exposed" to artificial intelligence are projected to grow more slowly through 2034, Anthropic found. The least exposed occupations tend to require physical abilities. Jobs such as groundskeepers, cooks, motorcycle mechanics, lifeguards and bartenders ranked among those with the lowest exposure.

Despite findings that AI has had a negligible impact on the labour market thus far, researchers suggest the technology could ultimately have a seismic shift across various professions, ranging from legal services to sales. —*Agencies*

**JOBS MOST EXPOSED TO AI**

1. Computer programmers
2. Customer service representatives
3. Data entry keyers
4. Medical record specialists
5. Market research analysts and marketing specialists
6. Sales representatives
7. Financial and investment analysts
8. Software quality assurance analysts
9. Information security analysts
10. Computer user support specialists

**JOBS LEAST EXPOSED TO AI**

1. Groundskeepers
2. Cooks
3. Motorcycle mechanics
4. Lifeguards
5. Bartenders

## Pentagon & Anthropic clash over autonomous warfare

**WASHINGTON, 7 MARCH**

A senior Pentagon official reported that the recent clash with Anthropic stemmed from disputes over US President Donald Trump's "Golden Dome" missile defence program.

Undersecretary of Defense **Emil Michael** said Anthropic's refusal to allow AI-driven autonomy in space-based weapons led to the company being designated a "supply chain risk" on Wednesday.

Michael, in a podcast on Friday, called the AI firm's ethical limits on its chatbot Claude an irrational obstacle as the US military pursues autonomous swarms of drones, underwater vehicles and other machines to compete with rivals like China.

The comments came after the Pentagon formally designated San Francisco-based Anthropic a supply chain risk,

cutting off its defence work using a rule designed to prevent foreign adversaries from harming national security systems. Anthropic has vowed to sue over the designation, which affects its business partnerships with other military contractors. Trump has also ordered federal agencies to immediately stop using Claude.

Anthropic said it only sought to restrict its technology from being used for two high-level usages: mass surveillance of Americans or fully autonomous weapons. —*PTI*

# NZ stands in the way of India's date with history

## Santner expects final against India to be a high-scoring contest

**AHMEDABAD, 7 MARCH**

An insanely talented and incredibly consistent Indian cricket team will carry the weight of a nation's hopes in its pursuit of history when it goes up against a tenacious New Zealand in a classic David versus Goliath final of the T20 World Cup here on Sunday.

On 19 November 2023, the expansive amphitheatre called the Narendra Modi Stadium witnessed a teary-eyed and emotionally spent Rohit Sharma drag himself up the dressing-room stairs after Australia had silenced India in the ODI World Cup final.

The distraught home side and a silent stadium, with 93,000 people, have carried the cross ever since, even though the T20 team somewhat made amends for that heartbreak by winning the 2024 world title under Rohit.

The shortest format team will now look to become the first side ever to defend the crown under Suryakumar Yadav and also the first to win the coveted trophy three times.

Suryakumar, a street-smart cricketer who embodies the famous Mumbai spirit, will not only be itching to create his own legacy as captain but also wants to put an end to the agony of 19 November 2023.

Suryakumar and his mates can draw inspiration from what happened exactly 364 days back on 9 March 2025. It was the day India beat an almost similar New Zealand side in the ICC Champions Trophy, albeit in the 50-over format.

Suryakumar wasn't a part of that side but can always take heart from that one-sided win in Dubai. To win a final, one needs a lot of pluck but also can't do without a slice of luck. It need not be a perfect game, but the right things need to happen at the right time. India literally won the semifinal of the ongoing showpiece when Harry Brook dropped Sanju Samson.

The 'Men In Blue' wouldn't mind such bloopers from the opposition on Sunday.

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner is clear about what to expect from the T20 World Cup 2026 final against India in Ahmedabad, at least as far as the pitch is concerned. When India last featured in an ICC final at the same venue, a lot was said and written about the nature of the pitch at the venue.

Speaking ahead of the final against India at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, Santner acknowledged the challenge posed by a "world-class" Indian bowling attack and a pitch that appears primed for high scores.

Addressing the press conference eve of the summit clash, Santner said his side is excited for the final and acknowledged that India will be under immense pressure to retain the T20 World Cup title in front of a packed Narendra Modi Stadium. Santner also repeated Australia skipper Pat Cummins' 2023 remarks, saying he and his team intends to silence the crowd.

*—PTI*

Sunderland is the first woman to score centuries in three consecutive Test innings - *PTI*

# Sutherland's all-round brilliance pushes India to a corner

**PERTH, 7 MARCH**

Ace all-rounder Annabel Sutherland added two wickets to her hundred of rare quality to hand Australia firm control over India on Day 2 of the women's one-off day-night Test here on Saturday.

Sutherland smashed her fourth century (129 off 171 balls) in the last seven innings, third in a row, to guide Australia to 323 for an innings lead of 125 runs, and the hosts then reduced India to 105 for six at stumps. 0

Pratika Rawal (43) and Sneh Rana (14) were batting at the close.

India still trails by 20 runs, as pacer Sutherland claimed the crucial wickets of skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and Jemimah Rodrigues.

But Sutherland first pegged India back with the bat, getting a hundred in 133 balls through a swipe off pacer Kranti Gaud's short-pitched ball that flew over stumper Richa Ghosh for a four.

The right-hander, who averages close to 90 across eight Tests, was at her best against pacers and spinners alike.

She was imperious against the spin of Deepti Sharma, driving gloriously between cover and mid-off region, and when Gaud pitched it up to her, the 24-year-old was dexterous enough to clatter the bowler through mid-wicket for a boundary.

It was a fine exhibition of batting mechanics, merging power and timing with her ability to watch the ball closely.

Sutherland was engaged in two vital alliances after Australia started the second day at a slightly insecure 96 for three.

Veteran Ellyse Perry (76) gave Sutherland solid company during their 128-run stand for the fourth wicket.

It came to an end when Deepti trapped Perry in front of the wicket.

But Sutherland and a scratchy Beth Mooney, who was dropped twice in as many balls even before opening her account, added 54 runs for the fifth wicket to keep Australia in front.

India 198 and 105 for 6 (Rawal 43*, Hamilton 3-32) trail Australia 323 (Sutherland 129, Perry 76, Satghare 4-50) by 20 runs. *—PTI*

### England, WI, and SA to leave India over weekend

The England, South Africa and West Indies teams are set to leave India over the weekend on charter planes arranged by the ICC due to the disruption in air travel caused by the ongoing military conflict in West Asia. ESPNcricinfo has learned that England, after losing their semi-final to India on Thursday, will depart from Mumbai on Saturday evening, while West Indies and South Africa will take a different charter flight from Kolkata. England will fly direct to London. West Indies - along with South Africa - will go to Johannesburg first and then to Antigua; both teams are still awaiting confirmation on when exactly they will depart but the understanding is that it will be on Sunday.

*PTI*

### Sinner starts hunt for maiden Indian Wells title

**PARIS, 7 MARCH**

Jannik Sinner was relentless in his opening performance at the BNP Paribas Open on Saturday, dispatching Czech qualifier Dalibor Svrcina 6-1, 6-1. Seeking his first Indian Wells trophy, the second seed overwhelmed Svrcina with heavy ballstriking and imposing pace en route to a 64-minute victory."I feel mentally I'm in a good place," said Sinner, who was competing for the first time since his Doha defeat to Jakub Mensik. I'm calm, I'm relaxed. But I'm also very happy to compete. We did a lot of work. Many, many hours on court. Many hours in the gym. I'm trying to get a little bit stronger [physically]. We did double sessions, not many days off at all.—*PTI*

*PTI*

### Jayson Tatum thrives in return as Celtics beat Mavs

**NEW YORK, 7 MARCH**

Jayson Tatum had 15 points, 12 rebounds, and seven assists in his season debut to help the Boston Celtics defeat the visiting Dallas Mavericks 120-100 on Friday night. Tatum, who was in Boston's starting lineup and played 27 minutes, appeared in an NBA game for the first time since he tore his right Achilles tendon in Game 4 of last year's Eastern Conference semifinals against the New York Knicks.Boston received 24 points from Jaylen Brown and 20 from Derrick White. Neemias Queta added 16 points and 15 rebounds. The news wasn't all good for Boston, as Nikola Vucevic left the court in the first quarter with a fractured right ring finger.Klay Thompson made 5 of 11 3-point attempts and scored 19 points.—*PTI*

# Divyansh, Khyati win 10m Air Rifle T3 finals

**NEW DELHI, 7 MARCH**

Divyansh Singh Panwar and Khyati Chaudhary secured the top spots in the 10m Air Rifle men's and women's events, respectively, in the National Selection Trials 3 (Group A) here on Saturday.

Olympian Anish Bhanwala won the T3 finals of the 25m Rapid Fire Pistol event at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting range.

In the 10m Air Rifle men's finals, Tokyo Olympian Divyansh finished on top of the eight-man final with a score of 252.5. Parth Rakesh Mane finished in second place with a final score of 251.5, while Shahu Tushar Mane took third place with a score of 230.9.

The top spot in the women's finals was decided in an exciting shoot-off where Khyati prevailed over Mahit Sandhu after both were tied at 251.4 after the completion of 24 shots.

In the shoot-off, Khyati shot an outstanding 10.9 to secure the top spot ahead of Mahit, who shot 10.2. Mehuli Ghosh took third place with a final score of 230.1.

Earlier in the men's qualification, Dhanush Srikanth qualified for the finals in top spot with a score of 633.2, followed by Mahesh Babu Bathula, who shot 632.6.

The national record holder, Himanshu Dhillon, and Niraj Kumar shot 632.1 to qualify in third and fourth places, respectively. *—PTI*

# Max Verstappen gets X-rays on hands after crash

**PARIS, 7 MARCH**

Max Verstappen suffered a bizarre accident during Australian Grand Prix qualifying when his rear axle locked completely as he applied the brakes, causing the four-time world champion to spin off into the barriers.

The 28-year-old Dutchman was on his opening flying lap when the incident occurred approaching Turn 1, resulting in a high-speed spin through the gravel before a substantial impact with the wall.

Medical staff at the Melbourne circuit performed X-rays on Verstappen's hands following the crash, with the Red Bull driver confirming he escaped injury.

Verstappen said: "All good. I just had to get some X-rays done to see if my hands were OK, but nothing was broken.". *—PTI*

# Fred banned for 2 years for missing dope tests

**BERLIN, 7 MARCH**

American sprinter Fred Kerley has been suspended for missing three out-of-competition drug tests within 12 months, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) announced on Saturday.

The AIU said Kerley's missed tests qualify as whereabouts failures under the World Anti-Doping Code, which requires athletes in a registered testing pool to provide daily location details so they can be tested without notice.

Three missed tests or filing failures in a year can trigger a sanction of up to two years. Kerley, 30, won silver in the 100 metres at the Tokyo Olympics and bronze in Paris last summer.

He also captured the 100-metre world title in 2022.

Kerley joined the Enhanced Games in September 2025 a decision that came while he was facing a provisional suspension by the AIU for multiple whereabouts failures.

The event, which allows athletes to use performance-enhancing drugs that are banned in official competition, is set to take place on 24 May 2026, in Las Vegas. *—PTI*

**AUSTRALIAN GRAND PRIX**

# George Russell secures pole, leads Mercedes 1-2 in qualifiers

**SYDNEY, 7 MARCH**

George Russell took pole position and teammate Kimi Antonelli locked up the front row for Mercedes at Formula One's season-opening Grand Prix in Australia on Saturday.

Red Bull's four-time world champion Max Verstappen crashed out of the first qualifying session.

Briton Russell lapped the circuit in one minute, 18.518 seconds, 0.293 seconds ahead of Italian Antonelli, who came back from a huge crash in final practice earlier on Saturday.

It was Mercedes first pole in Melbourne since Lewis Hamilton's in 2019. "It was a great day, we knew there was a lot of potential in the car," said Russell. It really came alive this afternoon. Also really happy that Kimi's here... All in all, a pretty good day."

Antonelli faces a nervous wait for his position to be confirmed after his patched-up car dropped cooling-fan parts at the start of Q3 and Norris ran over one, sending debris flying and triggering a red flag. Stewards are investigating the incident.

Verstappen's Red Bull partner Isack Hadjar came third in chaotic qualifying, while Ferrari's Charles Leclerc was fifth. Home racer Oscar Piastri and defending champion Lando Norris were fifth and sixth for McLaren. *—PTI*

### Taiwan beats Vietnam 1-0 in Women's AC match

**PERTH, 7 MARCH**

Taiwan defeated Vietnam 1-0 on Saturday to move into second place in Group C at the Women's Asian Cup with one match remaining.

Su Yu-hsuan scored the decisive goal in the 26th minute after Saki Matsunaga's shot hit the crossbar, leaving Su to nod the rebound into an empty net for the team, which won the last of its three Asian Cup titles in 1981.

It was a deserved victory for Taiwan, 2-0 losers to Japan on Wednesday, which created several chances to extend its lead.

Vietnam, the 2022 quarterfinalist, beat India in its opener but struggled to threaten the Taiwan defense and failed to record a shot on target. Thi Duyen Tran came closest with a first-half chance that went wide from inside the area.

Both teams now have three points from two games. Taiwan sits ahead of Vietnam and behind Japan, which faced India later Saturday. India is still seeking its first point in the tournament.

Record attendance continues. Australian organizers said Saturday that the tournament had sold 250,000 tickets. The milestone follows the tournament, already breaking the all-time total attendance record, with 92,795 fans at the first 10 matches.

That surpassed the previous record of 59,910 for the 2010 edition in China.

State of play: The top two teams in each of the three groups advance to the quarterfinals along with the two best third-place teams. *—PTI*

### India thrashed 0-11 by Japan

**PERTH, 7 MARCH**

India was handed a 0-11 drubbing by Japan in a Group C fixture at the AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 on Saturday at the Perth Rectangular Stadium in Australia.

This is the Blue Tigresses' second-heaviest defeat in the history of this tournament, after the 0-12 thrashing at the hands of China in the 2003 edition.

Manchester United's Hinata Miyazawa and West Ham United's Riko Ueki bagged hat-tricks on the night, while Japan captain Yui Hasegawa, of Manchester City, and Kiko Seike, of Brighton, scored braces. Maya Hijikata also got on the scoresheet. *—PTI*

**UNDER NEW COACH MARIJNE**

# *India eyes women's hockey WC berth*

**HYDERABAD, 7 MARCH**

Under a new but familiar coach in Sjoerd Marijne, India will aim to secure a coveted berth at the upcoming FIH Women's Hockey World Cup when they open their campaign against Uruguay in the Qualifiers here on Sunday.

The tournament will feature eight teams: hosts India, England, Scotland, Korea, Italy, Uruguay, Wales, and Austria competing for three coveted qualification spots for the global showpiece.

At stake will be three direct World Cup berths, with the teams finishing first, second, and third in the tournament earning direct qualification for the 2026 edition, to be hosted jointly by Belgium and the Netherlands from August 14 to 30, alongside the men's event.

*PTI*



It will be Marijne's first assignment back as head coach, as the Dutchman returns since leaving the position after the team's historic fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

India is currently ranked ninth in the world and is the second-highest ranked team in the tournament behind England, who are ranked seventh globally.

"We are really excited to play the qualifiers at home in front of our fans. The team has been preparing very hard for this tournament because we know what is at stake. Every team here is competing for a place in the World Cup, so we expect tough matches from the start," India captain Salima Tete said.

Going by world rankings, India start as favourites against Uruguay, and if not for a bad day in office, they are certain to win. *—PTI*